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## From alliance to acquaintance: Australia's security relationship with the United States

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Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



## T H E S I S

FROM ALLIANCE TO ACQUAINTANCE;  
THE AUSTRALIAN - AMERICAN SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

by

Mark J. Taylor

December, 1991

Thesis Advisor:

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**From Alliance to Acquaintance:  
Australia's Security Relationship With The United States**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis explores the development of Australian concepts of national security, in the context of traditional and continuing psychological dependency upon its links of alliance to the West. The Government claims that Australia's policy of defence self-reliance within an alliance framework is a 'conceptual watershed' that has 'liberated' Australian foreign policy; but it is an old theme in defence policy. Australia still awaits a real revolution in its security concepts and sense of regional identity. ANZUS, symbol of Australia's ties to the western community, and the false impressions and expectations it creates, now acts more to inhibit than to assist Australia's future growth as a nation.

George Washington observed that "the nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave" and that a truly independent nation bent upon charting its own course in the world "may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies". Australia's own history points to the enduring good sense of those observations. There is little more to be gained from alliance than from acquaintance - and to sustain the latter, existence of the former is neither necessary nor desirable as a permanent state of affairs. Both Australia and the United States can in the future "safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies".

The need for an independent national defence was recognised before Federation in 1901. However, Australians lacked confidence in their ability to survive as a fully independent nation. Australian national interest was identified with supporting the British Empire, and in maintaining a racially pure "British" society. There also developed a belief in some kind of informal Anglo-Saxon brotherhood that carried with it a moral obligation for America as well as Britain to help protect the 'indefensible continent' against an invasion by an Asian power.

Still, Australia developed its own defence policy and acquired a navy of its own; but it continued to allow foreign and economic policy mostly to be determined in London. World War I saw Japan and Australia cooperate to eliminate Germany's Pacific presence before the end of 1914. Australia was safe, but felt obliged to send troops and its navy to support Britain in the northern hemisphere. From this point onward, Australia was drawn ever more toward the notion of a global Imperial Union, with common defence, foreign and economic policies, coordinated from London. The practical difficulties of this were identified and ignored. Australia forsook self-reliance for the promise of British assistance in time of threat, in return for Australia's commitment to Imperial (British) interests.

Australian support for Britain hobbled relations with America, but in December 1941 Britain could not provide the promised "main fleet to Singapore". Australia's troops and airmen were away fighting for Britain, which could not provide war materiel to Australia either. The Prime Minister turned to



America for help. This was provided but it took time, and the United States and Britain already had agreed to beat Hitler first. Although they were fighting together in the Southwest Pacific, diplomatic relations between America and Australia were often strained.

In 1951, Australia and New Zealand concluded a tripartite security pact with the United States. ANZUS did not commit the United States to help defend Australia, but Australians chose to believe it did. Australia transferred its 'Imperial' dependencies to the new relationship. Since then, Australian politicians in particular have been prone to belief in an Australian "special relationship" with the United States, expecting economic and diplomatic considerations as well as a military guarantee. Australia's practical alliance contribution has been small, but the alliance has been a diplomatic burden for Australia, and something of a fool's paradise economically.

In its history as a nation, Australia has always seen itself as part of the west and has relied upon its links to those far distant nations for its security in all senses - its prosperity, its population, its defence and even its sense of community and identity. This has to change. Australia's future security hinges heavily on how it is regarded by regional nations. The ANZUS connection causes Australia still to be regarded as a white outpost in the Western Pacific and inhibits its regional integration. But this is vital to both Australia's economic development future and its sense of national identity.

Today, the end of the cold war is bringing radical changes in America's view of its interests in Asia. These will diminish, not enhance, the importance in its eyes of its alliance with Australia. The assumption of mutuality of interest is stronger than the fact. The relationship has really only existed in any definable way due to the existence of conflict, or the sense of impending conflict. In times of 'peace', the US and Australia have been largely indifferent to each other; and even in war, the passage of time and events has tended to make the relationship even more fractious, rather than "even stronger".

Australia has still to liberate its security policies and national identity from the burden of formal alliance with the West. It is time for Australia to take an active part in redefining and pursuing its security interests in the expectation that in all circumstances it can rely for assistance only upon regional partners; and in the last extremity can rely only upon itself. Both Australia and America must now conduct an honest appraisal of their relationship, and determine how and in what ways they would prefer it to develop in the future. They should give less emphasis to permanent military alliance, and devote more effort to developing a more solid and enduring acquaintanceship.

## INTRODUCTION

### STILL WAITING FOR THE REVOLUTION

"How on earth has such a nation survived until 1988?" asked Noel McLachlan in one of the more stimulating literary outgrowths of Australia's celebration in 1988 of the bicentennial anniversary of European settlement. He observed that Australia's "ideal of nationhood is only dimly perceived and half-heartedly embraced." And even though Australia has "had its moments of nationalist charm and ardour, even glory..." there has been "no full-scale revolution..." because "most Australians appear to have been interested in other things: [mainly] getting their fair share of the self-esteemed workingmen's paradise and it's pleasures - beaches climate and all. Hedonism not nationalism - except in sport."<sup>1</sup>

There certainly is some form of distinctive Australian national identity, and it is sometimes stridently asserted - but the nation as a political-economic entity seems to lack both the stature and the confidence which one would expect from a country which is richly endowed with natural resources and, as its politicians (and most of the academic-bureaucratic policy establishment) never tire of saying, is also one of the "most secure in the world". But the fact is that Australia for almost -----

1. Noel McLachlan, Waiting For the Revolution, Melbourne: Penguin Books Australia, 1989, pp2-3.

the whole of its existence, whether as a collection of British colonies or as a nominally independent sovereign nation, has indeed been a 'frightened country'<sup>1</sup> which has sought comfort largely by submerging its identity within (and in the process, subordinating its interests and policies to) the largely illusory notion of a worldwide Western (primarily, Anglo-Saxon) fraternity founded in a principle of 'all for one and one for all'. As Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans put it:

For its first century and a half, Australia viewed the world vicariously as a daughter of [the British] Empire. A handful of matters aside, the national interest was [perceived to be] more or less indistinguishable from the Imperial interest, and choices effectively non-existent... Nor did the situation change dramatically even with the post-War switch of focus to the United States....<sup>2</sup>

Senator Evans and his colleagues in the Labor Government would have the public believe and may themselves be confident that they have wrought something of a revolution in Australian defence and foreign policy, and in economic policy too. But at best, they have only planted the seeds. We still await the revolution. Australia's overall approach to national security still seems to be rooted in the notion of an 'indefensible' continent which still "require[s] a foreign policy that secure[s] the attention of great and powerful friends ... prepared to  
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1. A term coined by Australian former diplomat and head of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Alan Renouf, in his book of the same title.

2. Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans, "Australia's Place in the World: the Dynamics of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," in Desmond Ball (ed.), Australia and the World: Prologue and Prospects, Canberra, Australian National University, 1990. p323



defend Australia." There is no doubt that, under the pressure of a collapsing national economy and a radically changing regional and world politico-economic environment, Australia has 'grown up' considerably as nation, especially in the last decade, and able and articulate spokesmen such as Senator Evans have played key roles in defining and promoting a view of Australian national interests in a primarily regional context<sup>1</sup>.

Yet even as he hailed the "conceptual watershed" of a policy of "defence self-reliance" which finally "liberated Australian foreign policy" from its former preoccupation with supporting the interests of the powers to whom Australia looked for its ultimate security, Evans could say (with both a straight face and an apparently clear conscience) that Australia's military alliance with the United States "remains a fundamental pillar of our defence and foreign policy". So it still is today, according to no less a person than Prime Minister Robert Hawke, who "hope[s] to reinforce that perception ... in the [East Asia] region [and] among Australians as well."<sup>2</sup>

My belief is that the foundations of this "pillar" are far less substantial than many on either side of the Pacific may wish

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1. The main vehicle for this, besides regular reiteration in speeches and the like, was Evans' "Ministerial Statement" (published as a booklet), Australia's Regional Security. Canberra: AGPS, December 1989.

2. The Rt.Hon. R.J.L. Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia (1983-), Australia's Security in Asia. "The Asia Lecture" given at the Asia-Australia Institute of the University of New South Wales, Sydney, 24 May 1991.

to concede; further, the notion of a permanent alliance with the United States has outlived its usefulness as a support for Australian national security policy, and increasingly serves only to obscure the nation's view of where its future interests must lie.

It is high time for Australia to genuinely confront and surmount its continuing 'dual dependencies': its dependence on the cultural-economic framework of the "western (or, 'developed') world" to define itself in global affairs; and its dependence for its ultimate defence upon a trans-Pacific military alliance of questionable practical worth. Having not quite let go of Mother England's skirts, Australia still clings tightly to Uncle's hand - and continues to seek both approbation and comfort in the embrace of the west.

Australia today resembles nothing so much as the unconfident son who though celebrating his majority, is content to live with his parents, risking nothing while waiting for the 'big opportunity' to present itself virtually at the doorstep. All the while, given reassurance and sustenance by despairing parents and scorned by former peers (or inferiors) now doing for themselves in a world of risk and promise. McLachlan the nationalist cited the view ("from the heart ... the reverse of patronising") of English historian Hugh Seton-Watson:

If Australians could realise that they no longer needed to prove, either to themselves or to others, that they were different from, and just as good as, Americans or British; and if they could understand that it is not enough to inherit a 'lucky country' but that it is necessary to make provision, and spend money for its defence, then a marvellous future [awaits] them.<sup>1</sup>

Such a realisation would indeed be evidence of - and is fundamental to - a genuine Australian revolution: liberation from the psychological shackles of the "western alliance". Australia is prone to make too much of its cultural affinity to the west and not enough of the central imperative of its existence and definition as nation - geography. It is time for Australia to "leave home" and travel, mentally, the 10,000 miles which separate it, literally, from its supposed sources of aid and comfort.

Precious little of either will be forthcoming from any quarter by the turn of the century, in a world wracked by the "necessary pains accompanying the birth of a new hyperindustrial order"<sup>2</sup> in which Europe and Japan are likely to form the two main centres of capital formation and consumption, competing with each other for the mantle vacated (though perhaps, only partially and temporarily) by a retrenching United States.

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1. McLachlan, Waiting For The Revolution, p3.

2. Jacques Attali, Millennium: Winners and Losers in the Coming World Order, New York: Random House, 1991, p12. Attali, president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, foresees the emergence of a "new market form" preceded by a period, which we are now entering, of "uncertainty and apparent regression" as the transition is made from the formerly dominant economic form.

Australia has nothing more to prove to either Americans or British; but it still has a lot to prove to itself - and to its geographical neighbours. To them it does have to prove it is different from the senior and junior partners of the Atlantic "special relationship". It does have to prove an independent identity - and a will to independently exist and prosper, to define, promote and be willing to defend unique and independent interests. Boiled down, Australia must become able to define itself without reference to an outdated, unrealistic and (regionally) unwelcome conception of power relationships. This is especially so because, like it or not, both the appeal and the influence of the west in East Asia will continue to decline, regardless of which of the world's key centres of economic power ultimately comes to preside over the emerging 'ninth market form'<sup>1</sup>. According to local perceptions that have gained

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1. Attali's description for the economic order which he expects to stabilise around a new "centre" in either Tokyo or somewhere in Europe. The previous eight market forms he refers to are defined by reference to periods in which a particular city-state or key national centre could be seen as the "dominant city where the essential financial, technical, cultural, and ideological power is concentrated." A kind of 'centre of the world system'. His eight centres: Bruges (1300); Venice (1450); Antwerp (1500); Genoa (1550); Amsterdam (1650); London (1750); Boston (1880); and New York (1930). Between each period of clearly definable dominance is an extended interregnum of "uncertainty and apparent regression"; or "crisis". This seems to fit today's circumstances rather well; especially with his view that "[crisis] begins when it becomes necessary to spend too much value to create and sustain demand ... and when too much is spent on military expenses to protect the market form". Seems familiar. My major quibble with his theory, as it develops, is that he does not really entertain a shift of the centre of gravity from East Coast USA to, say, Los Angeles; or maybe even Mexico City. And he probably overestimates Western Europe's prospects as one of the two major competitors for pre-eminence. A Central European 'corridor of power' could emerge, from "Berlin to Budapest".



increasing currency in the region, the fact remains that the nations of East Asia have achieved prosperity in large part by not emulating the West in their forms and practices of government, nor in their social structures and mores.

Whether it jumps or is pushed, the United States is unlikely to maintain any significant military force in permanent bases in East Asia by the turn of century. By this time, it will have realised that the "unipolar moment" of unchallenged military power is empty of promise for fashioning or maintaining a pre-eminent position in the emerging world order, and will be engaged in the radical internal reforms which, however difficult or unlikely may seem their accomplishment, are essential to arrest America's continuing relative decline as a world economic power and cultural influence. The future strength of the United States, it seems to me, lies in fulfilling the potential, so long denied others and still largely untapped, in its own "western hemisphere": Latin America. With which at least some others seem to agree.\*

Australia meanwhile will be jockeying for position in a world of increasingly cut-throat competition, as the newly industrialising (or, like Australia, re-industrialising) nations

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\* According to "the International Finance Corporation [an arm of the World Bank] and several private sources", Latin America "appears to have quieted down" and "is in the middle of a transition toward privatisation that could finally transform it into an entirely new economic landscape". See Rodolfo A. Windhausen, "Capital Flows South", Christian Science Monitor, 18 September 1991. Stand by for expansion of NAFTA into AFTA. Followed by trans-South Atlantic investment into Africa?

attempt to secure and if possible improve their positions in the economic "hinterland" of the major centres. The mortal fear of all these nations, which have or are acquiring a taste for the fruits of economic development, will be to avoid being pushed out into the "periphery" - that region of the economic wilderness that Attali conceives as the realm of hapless and increasingly hopeless providers of labour and raw materials. Nations will be prepared to go to war to avoid this fate.

Australia cannot count upon influence or favour as a western proxy in any of the centres in which it must compete, chief of which will be East Asia: the most dynamic and ferociously competitive region in the world. Australia will have to stand or fall, and preferably rise, on its own merits. Nor can it count upon military support, even in extremity, from a far distant, locally preoccupied power whose interests may not be engaged - and which if they are, might well lie on the 'other side of the fence'. Australia does not need to subscribe to another version of the infamous Singapore strategy<sup>1</sup>, nor can it rely on updated version of the equally ineffective Imperial Preference system. It must finally confront the necessity to hoe its own row, in a region which until now has been regarded as culturally and philosophically alien.

Suggestions of this type have traditionally been derided by the political right in Australia as both unrealistic and offensive - a form of cultural treason. They are not especially  
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1. See Chapters 3 and 4.

welcome on the left either - much of which has yet to shake off a xenophobia rooted in a propensity to blame economic torpor and unemployment of 'native born Australians' alike on Asian mercantilism and "low-wage Asian labour"<sup>1</sup>. Neither side has proven willing to bear the necessary expenditure to *defend* the nation in the narrow sense, or to *enhance its security* in the wider sense. The chronic and long-standing lack of faith shown by Australians in themselves, and their continuing inability to come to terms with the realities of their situation, are most marked in the field of national security policy.

In Australia, national security has commonly been narrowly defined as the ambit of 'defence' policy. The idea of comprehensive national security has only recently started to flower. The very notion of the 'indefensible continent' itself reflects a deeply ingrained sense of inferiority which though perhaps seldom conceded in word (or thought), is constantly revealed through lack of deeds. At least since the First World War, it seems that the very conviction of its inability, independently to make secure (whether by guns or by guile) the nation and its interests has induced a sense of complacent fatalism in Australians and their governments. And though Australians could easily be (and were - perhaps, still are) convinced of the imminence of an Asian threat to their existence, they could at once demand that others supply their protection

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1. The rocketing per-capita GNP in many Asian nations, with its obvious implication for average wage levels, rarely is mentioned.

from this threat, whilst treating with disdain bordering on racial contempt the very people whom they acknowledged could at will overwhelm them.

Australian former Prime Minister Robert Menzies pointedly observed in 1939 that "what Great Britain calls the Far East is to us the near north" - but he like his predecessors and his successors ( chief among whom was himself after a period in well-deserved political exile) still conceived Australia to be more of a sharer, even inheritor, of the white man's burden than as part of it.\* However, Australia's greatest burden is to be found within itself; an accumulated weight of habitual preferences and prejudices, unreasoning fears and unrequited affections.

Most Australians are inordinately proud of their nation's martial prowess; yet newspaper polls repeatedly 'discover' that the Australian public has little or no confidence in the ability of the Australian Defence Force to defend the nation against external aggression. Part of the problem may be that the form of external aggression is seldom specified, and the bulk of the

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\* I have always wondered whether Kipling's poem was an exhortation to "leadership" or a warning against the assumption that such was necessary or desirable in the manner conceived and practised by the western powers in Asia and elsewhere. Just reflect upon some of his words:

"Take up the White Man's burden,  
Send forth the best ye breed  
Go, bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need"

Not much glory there, and as he warned, those "silent, sullen peoples" have weighed "your Gods and you"; and seem to find them wanting.



population, used to its history being presented in a European or continental Asian context\* (of invasion and subsequent physical domination or absorption), is almost never invited to consider the broader issue of what constitutes - and what is required to promote and preserve - the national security.

The history of Australian defence policy is largely the history of invasion scares - or the lack of them. It reflects the narrow outlook of a group of 'abandoned souls' struggling to adapt themselves to an environment which seems by its nature almost implacably hostile to domination by European man - which is still what most Australians are; and arguably, through the pursuit of so-called multiculturalism, are in some ways being further encouraged to believe they are.<sup>+</sup> Although it is impossibly located over 10,000 miles from either of the two fonts of western influence, Australia remains still a cultural dependency of the west.

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\* It should also be understood that with the exception of the British immigrants to Australia, this actually has been the physical experience of many European and Asian immigrants in the post-war boom of immigration that more than doubled Australia's population in 30 years. In many cases, "invasion" was also accomplished with the aid of internal subversion. Australia also absorbed many British and Dutch 'refugees' from the de-colonising nations of Asia. All of which helps account for the extraordinary conservatism of much of the Australian electorate ( regardless of which major party it votes for, since both are essentially "non-revolutionary" in the sense of devotion to the status quo. More of which later).

+ Ironically, by more recently 'entrenched' migrant groups from Southern Europe, who among other things push the teaching of European languages and 'heritage'; something that in my view can be done at home. One can include only so much in a school curriculum, and the clear priority is for Australians to gain more knowledge and understanding of their neighbours.

The age of electronic communication has perhaps tended to reinforce rather than reduce this fact. The 'tyranny of distance' though real in terms of actual contact and perception of shared interest, has nonetheless been largely thwarted in its positive aspects of *emphasising* separateness and the need for getting to know the neighbours better, by the ease with which news and views from "home" (wherever it may have been) are transmitted to new and less new arrivals to the country. Thus has been fostered a perhaps excessive sense of shared identity and common purpose with those so far away. The national performance is in many ways strangely out of tune with the national self-image of a fiercely independent, easy going and open society of opportunity.

This is also the case with Australia's partner in the ANZUS alliance which promises so little yet is held to mean so much. The heart of the matter is that Australia is not yet fully mature, nor is either Australia or the United States fully confident in itself. ANZUS to some extent makes each feel that it is needed; but ANZUS has had a nearly fatal effect on Australian long-term regional policy, whilst making almost no impact on that of the USA other than what it can be exploited for in the short term. The evidence of this is simple, but not simplistic. Though Australians are ( as stated) unshakeably of the opinion that their armed forces could "not defend Botany Bay on a Sunday afternoon" \*\* they similarly seem to be unperturbed either by -----

\*\* A remark attributed to former Liberal Party Minister for Defence (1976-83) James Killen in a speech attacking the Labour Government's supposedly inept handling of the Defence portfolio.

their governments' predilection to keep spending on the defence forces at minimal levels or by the also common tendency of governments to announce defence programmes which are subsequently reviewed to death on no more 'strategic' basis than the need for economy. This economy is generally derived by a simple "zero sum" federal budget formula that takes full account of what former Prime Minister Menzies correctly identified as the *medulla oblongata* of nearly every voter's political nervous system - the "hip-pocket nerve".

Australians and their governments have yet to come to terms with the fundamental rationale for possession of armed forces - to provide government with the means independently to deploy and where necessary apply force both to promote the broader national interest as well as to more narrowly protect national sovereign territory.

They are still inclined (and have been encouraged) to see defence policy principally as a way to provide the intellectual underpinning for persistence with what might be called the "insurance premium strategy" - a means of paying out the minimum possible to a powerful and willing ally consistent with the anticipated return of economic favour at all times, and prompt assistance in the event of looming military disaster. The rhetoric of self-reliance is impressive, and it would be both insulting and unfair to impugn the honest motives of its authors. But revolution? Self-reliance is very much a function of self-

respect and self-confidence; of moral force. Where is it? When will it be found? Still, I think, we wait.

The objective of a "force in being [able] to defeat any challenge to our sovereignty [including] specific capabilities designed to respond effectively to attacks within our area of direct military interest" appears wholly laudable, and is perhaps at last a sign of that long-awaited self-confidence. Yet Australia's defence spending has now (1991-2) fallen to close to its lowest ever postwar level (2.3% of GNP)<sup>1</sup>. The pace of re-equipment of its armed forces is slow indeed, despite an announced intent to further reduce service manpower and rely still more upon "modern technology" and upon "warning time" whose elasticity in definition is matched only by its demonstrable non-utility as a 'cue' for either developing armed forces or (more importantly) conducting diplomacy. And effective diplomacy can still, in certain situations, depend heavily upon the ready availability of effective force. However, the habit of dependency seems too well ingrained: the perpetuation of dependence has become synonymous with pursuit of self-interest:

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1. In 1987, with Australia facing what the government described as "generally favorable prospects for security in [our] own geopolitical environment", it was estimated that to achieve the "levels of defence capability and the priorities reflected" in the governments' ten-year plan, then "over the life of the program", there would need to be allocated to defence "resources generally within the order of 2.6% to 3.0% of GDP." Even this meagre amount had to cover also the heavy costs associated with using various defence equipment projects as ways to "kick-start" Australian industry; though the dividend for the services, in logistic supportability, should be appreciable - if the industries can sustain themselves.



Australia's alliances with the United States and other nations impose upon us the obligation to provide for our own defence [as] spelled out in Article II of the ANZUS Treaty ... American expectations in this regard have been stressed by US administrations since the late 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

All this may be so, but how does it contribute to the "liberation of Australian foreign policy"? Few would quibble with the assertion that "basic self-reliance is the minimum that any self-respecting country should contribute to an alliance", though one might ask: "what is the purpose of the alliance?" It seems reasonable enough to state that "Australia can scarcely pretend to contribute to the defence of broader western interests if it cannot defend itself." But what are those interests - and how well do they coincide, if at all, with Australia's regional and broader objectives? Does a nation raise and maintain armed forces in response to the demands of others of others, or out of obligation to itself? Are those armed forces (and its economic-industrial and foreign policy measures) mere tokens or a genuine earnest of national aspiration and will?

One should bear in mind that the current prescription for Australia's defence strategy and force structure, from which these passages are taken, was written mostly in 1986, during what might be called the last big chill of the cold war. A lot has changed since then; and the biggest changes in Asia - and the world - are yet to come. Australia is embarking on a new era with

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1. The 1987 Defence White Paper, The Defence of Australia, 1987 Canberra: AGPS, March 1987.



a conceptual framework for its national security that is rooted in the past. The past will not suffice for Australia to accomplish from within the revolution that is needed in the nation's perception of its security interests. This internal revolution is the only way to avoid the imposition from without of a more fundamental and detrimental revolution in Australia's security circumstances and future regional standing.

The revolution (being more conceptual than physical) need not be violent and bloody if self initiated and pursued with vigour and determination to succeed. For many it assuredly will be emotionally wrenching; but it is nonetheless necessary, and chronically overdue. Australia is regularly exhorted by its geographical neighbours to get more involved in Asia; especially Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup>. Which is shorthand for being less mentally dependent upon its links to the west. However, the pleasures of a sybaritic and superficially secure life, with that security largely underwritten, it has been understood, by generations of 'old' and 'new' Australians, by those same links to the west, are not easily foresworn. Especially not, perhaps, by the vast numbers of postwar immigrants who have been enticed to its shores precisely by that image - which is mainly that of the life they would have wished to have led (circumstances and Hitler/Stalin

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1. In a typical comment, regularly repeated by himself and other Southeast Asian leaders, Singapore's then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in November 1988 "suggested it was time for Australia to recognise it was its destiny to be part of the Asia-Pacific region or risk becoming more and more irrelevant to it." See: Michael Malik, "No Lee-way on Migrants", Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), 1 December 1988, 26.

willing), with sunshine and salt water added. But pay for it? Fight for it? Cultural affinity is insufficient excuse for denying the imperative of geography and (ultimately) of economic reality.

All of this tends to lead one to McLachlan's own question: "Has the nation a future?" Yes; but only, as with all emergent nations, through a violent break with the past. As I have said, this will be more an emotional than a forcible break - but it must be made. The break, in times past, and which a predominantly British population could not make, was with the British Empire. It took the twin shocks of war and Britain's economic 'abandonment' of Australia to force its attention finally from the Atlantic and Mediterranean to the Pacific. Today, the break that must be made is with the wider concept of the "western community" - but principally with its representative in chief, the United States. This is especially hard for Australians to come to terms with - superficially. But it is not hard at all when national interest is considered.

"Australia, a third-world economy with a first-world standard of living, risks becoming a third-world economy with a third-world standard of living" wrote The Economist's anonymous correspondent in a 1986 survey of the nation's prospects.<sup>1</sup> He need not have confined the scope of his remarks to the national economy. Australia is indeed a third world developing country

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1. "Forward Defensive: A Survey of Australia". The Economist, 7 March 1986.

that is accustomed to regard itself as belonging to the "first world". This is illusion. Although Australia received a direct technology transfer from the then leader of the first world by the process of white colonisation, and an accompanying direct graft of social-cultural heritage and legal-administrative institutions, it is in many respects still a 'developing nation'. And as such it has less in common with the leaders of the industrialised world than it may care to think.

Australia's role in the world to date has been conceived in the context of its notional "first world" status, for the most part. Though it has had occasion to recognise and lament its limited dimension on the regional and world stage, this has more generally been comfortably obscured by its habit of association with the front rank of nations - nations whose interests are in many ways opposed to those of the developing world. Australia has been an assistant to the upholders of the status quo of world power, and has profited but little from that status. It is time for it join the ranks of the revolutionaries helping shape the world of the next century.

Its lengthy association with the United States however, no less than its former association with Great Britain, is serving to bind it ever more tightly to a futile attempt to preserve a status quo that already is crumbling fast. The "third world" is

precisely where Australia as an underdeveloped\* regional nation belongs, and where it can indeed best develop its potential as one of the key middle powers of the East Asia region and in the world. It cannot join this growing club without relinquishing its first world pretensions and dependencies. Unfortunately, and almost incomprehensibly, Australia is, apparently, once again bent upon doing the opposite. Looking at the supposed gains from its long association with the power-brokers of the west, one can only wonder why.

These thoughts are not especially original. They have been put, and the questions that arise been asked, in varying ways since at least the Second World war. But the time available to find answers is running out. Britain, which managed to fail the nation in several hours of need, and fooled it more a few times, is irrevocably gone - from the region physically, from the world in terms of effective influence on distant events. Yet few Australians would dispute that the two nations are likely to continue to share similar views on both the nature of and preferred approach to many issues of global and regional importance. The United States (at least, its permanent military presence), too, is going - if not of its own volition, then at the behest and insistence of others. Probably both will coincide, at any rate, and honour will superficially be satisfied on both sides.

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\* I think that, with respect to the resources that it has available, human and material, Australia is woefully underdeveloped. It is about time Australia stopped advertising potential and instead demonstrated some achievement.



As for Australia, the need for a genuinely revolutionary review of its security fundamentals is almost painfully clear. The critical question is: will the revolution come from within or from without? Unless the former is achieved, the latter is inevitable, and no more welcome for that. Senator Evans has put on record his view that:

The late 1980s and early 1990s are watershed years for Australia. We are, whether we realise it or not, engaged in nothing less than the reshaping of our national identity.<sup>1</sup>

This seems to be so, but it is not enough; is it not also time to reassess our national goals and our international relationships, to cast off habit masquerading as tradition, and domestic expediency masquerading as security necessity? To be prepared to pay the costs and reap the benefits of throwing off at last the 'golden shackles' of alliance, for the genuine reward of free acquaintance? How much longer will it take for that 'new identity' to stride out on its own?

It is time for Australia to take an active part in redefining and pursuing its security interests in the expectation that *in all circumstances* it can rely for assistance only upon *regional* partners; and in the last extremity it can not count upon a great and powerful friend, but only upon itself. To admit this and act upon it - promptly - is to accomplish our security revolution. And what is not done promptly from within, may well

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1. The Age (Melbourne), 3 November 1991. Reporting the launch of a book co-authored by Senator Evans and Bruce Grant.

encourage from without changes in our security circumstances that will not be to our liking. A revolution from without could well determine Australia's future; simply by taking it out of our hands.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

The United States Secretary of State Mr James A. Baker III and the secretary of Defence Mr Richard B. Cheney, and the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Senator Gareth Evans and the Minister for Defence Senator Robert Ray met on October 8, 1990, in Washington, D.C., to discuss significant global, regional and bilateral issues.

Both sides welcomed the continuation of close and regular ministerial-level consultations within the framework of their long-standing alliance. The discussions highlighted their extensive mutual interests and shared strategic perceptions as allies under the ANZUS [Australia, New Zealand and the United States] Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

The preamble to the post-Ministerial talks communique looks a pretty standard piece of work: a reassurance to all and sundry, including the participants and their electorates, that such talks are important and ought to continue; and an assurance that the two nations continue to see the present and future course of world events in much the same light. But how can they?

The perspective from the United States, one of the world's most populous nations and still the world's largest economy, its preeminent military power, located in the northern hemisphere astride the division between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans , and for over forty years widely regarded (not least by itself) as the guarantor of the material prosperity and physical security of

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1. US-Australia Joint Communique released by Embassy of Australia, Washington DC, 8 October 1990.

not only western Europe but of substantial portions of East and Southwest Asia, inevitably must differ substantially from the outlook of a minor power on the southern edge of East Asia. Australia, still sparsely populated and only partially industrialised\*, and still struggling to identify its political-economic 'niche' in the world, has to its east of it only the western shores of Latin America and to the west the still largely undeveloped tracts of the "dark continent"; both some 4-5000 miles distant. To the south, and not much closer, the frozen wastes of Antarctica lie unpeopled and uninviting; to the north, the most economically dynamic, and to most Australians still<sup>1</sup>, the most culturally alien region of the world.

The United States has been accustomed to regard itself as the standard bearer of democracy, arbiter of 'western values' and protector of what has been loosely termed the "Free world". Australia on occasion has played the role of journeyman-subcontractor to past and present Centurions of the Western world, but has more usually seen itself (or been content to see -----

\* The major portion of export earnings (51%) is generated by primary industry, including energy and minerals extraction. Australia is a net energy exporter; in 1987 it ranked 9th amongst the world's energy producers (higher than Iran, Iraq, or the UAE). See: The Economist Book of Vital World Statistics, pp162-9.

1. The overwhelming majority of the Australian population has its ethnic roots in Britain, Eire and continental Europe, with people of English, Scottish and Irish descent predominant. It should also be borne in mind that those parts of Australia which are physically closest and most culturally receptive to Asia are also the most sparsely populated - the Northern Territory (twice as big as Texas; or, about 2/3 the area of Mexico) has less than 200,000 people, and is not yet a properly constituted State, being administered from Canberra through a local House of Assembly.



itself) as a beneficiary, not a guarantor, of this western-defined global protectorate. Talk of 'mature, equal' partnership between Australia and the United States is common, especially from the Australian side of the house whence it could be said to be gotten out of forlorn hope by wistful self-deception. Similar utterances from the US amount to little more than a diplomatic pat on the head. Relations between the US and Australia lack depth, despite a superficially close coincidence stemming from the early recognition in Australia of the United States first as a major Pacific power, and then as the only power which might feasibly be depended upon as a guarantor of security against substantial military threat.

But even today, there may still be a stronger sense of a lingering "Imperial Connection" in Australia - reinforced by continuing participation in the British Commonwealth and by the still-extant formal link to the British Crown - than there is of conscious, genuine affinity to the largest, most powerful English-speaking nation of the "Pacific Rim". The history of Australian-US relations indicates that the historical bonds are weak, with shared perceptions of strong mutuality of interest being transitory and wholly dependent on happenstance. Such periods as there have been when the patina of mutual warmth has overlaid the base metal of expedient 'unity' have been matched by lengthy periods of mutual suspicion and even outright hostility.

For all this, the United States and Australia have seen fit to remain linked in a formal military alliance relationship for the past forty years, the utility and value of which they regularly reaffirm. But even here, the two nations' "mutual interests" are not that extensive, and where they do coincide, the underlying motives and perceived ramifications for the furtherance of other interests, short and long term, may differ significantly. The strategic perceptions of the world's major nuclear and conventional power are almost impossibly different from those of a minor league nation that still has difficulty defining for itself the role if any of its small and steadily diminishing armed forces. The US can still very much choose what role it wants to play in the world - Australia, historically, has been content to let others choose for it, thus steadily increasing the difficulty of attempts to break free and choose for itself. Historically, too, the United States has chosen its wars (be they 'hot' or 'cold', ideological or economic); Australia has either followed or got dragged by others into most of those ( of all kinds) in which it has been involved.

### **Amaz: The Dependency Syndrome**

Americans are nowadays much given to complain that Japan has been given a 'free ride' in the field of military security and economic development, thanks to Americans bearing the cost of providing for its defence. Many Japanese, who would like to see their nation become more self-confident and visibly free of its former dependence upon their former guardian, attribute Japan's difficulty in breaking away, along with resentment at the

complications caused by this difficulty, to a feeling of *amae*. This word, with no direct equivalent in English, might be considered to express a uniquely Japanese feeling; just another of those many things that 'you westerners would not understand'. But as with so many things, the feeling is known elsewhere, even if the literary equivalent is not. An analyst of this emotion<sup>1</sup> has noted that *amae* "is to be found in Western society also." Australians, even if they do not know of *amae*, know all about *amae*; it has helped shape their past, and still exerts a mighty hold over their future.

Takeo Doi makes some interesting observations, pertinent to (but not directed toward) Australia, in his study of the 'anatomy of dependence'. *Amae* embraces "an overfamiliar attitude ... a way of speaking designed to attract attention." It

represents an attempt to draw close to the other person. ... the craving of a newborn child for close contact with its mother ... the desire to deny the fact of separation that is an inevitable part of human existence ... to obliterate the pain that this separation involves.<sup>2</sup>

The *amae* feeling can also embrace the need "to depend on another's affection", and to describe "self-indulgent behaviour by an infant ... presuming the love of its parents", or in another sense, "to presume on familiarity in a self-indulgent manner". Naturally, it encompasses also a sense of shame and -----

1. Takeo Doi, The Anatomy of Dependence, New York: Kodansha, 1981, p170.

2. Ibid., p167.

embarrassment, at acting in this way, and at manifesting too obviously the symptoms of dependent behaviour. And it also covers the feeling of resentment that arises through either requesting, or feeling obliged to dispense, paternal grace and favour. This is Japan today; this is Australia, too. *Amae* feeling generates both a "drive to dependence, seeking assimilation with the other", and "willful behaviour in a situation in which one has ... already been accepted...". In less intellectual terms, one could define *amae* as an expectation that, in return for acceptable gestures of affection and affiliation, one would be indulged in one's follies and rescued from their consequences.

Hiroshi Kitamura says that Japan "lost everything, including [its] national confidence"<sup>1</sup> with surrender in 1945. Australia lost its confidence with 'victory'. Before, during , and after the war, its people were treated like "twelve year old children" - and took it. Only a country with supreme belief in its eventual resurgence could have faced the disaster of 1945 and conclude that "the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest." Only in a nation sure of its cohesion and purpose could a leader exhort the people (in genuine expectation of compliance) to "pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable." Japan may be leaning on its  
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1. Hiroshi Kitamura, Psychological Dimensions of US-Japanese Relations, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1971, p13.



'revelation' of *Amae* as means to justify avoiding the burden of explaining to its neighbours where it wants to go and how it thinks it will get there, but Australia does not even acknowledge *amae*. It is incompatible with the image of the "big country"; and yet it is the single most observable characteristic of Australian foreign and defence policy over the whole of Australia's life as a nominally independent nation. Kitamura attributes to Japan a number of feelings<sup>1</sup> that have characterised Australian attitudes towards the United States from early in this century, and which war has served only to intermittently exaggerate or mute. How familiar these seem: "Respect and Awe" of the "huge American potential for both constructive and destructive action"; a "Feeling of being victimized" (*higaisha-ishiki*), or "a feeling of having been wronged or injured"; and "Placing on a Pedestal" of idealism, which alternates with a sense of "disillusionment" when the hero's feet of clay are once again revealed (embarrassing his adherents).

It is also possible to see in Australian foreign policy behaviour some other 'distinctive' Japanese forms of behaviour, to wit: "Unrealistic and take-it-for granted attitudes"; and "frustrated and hostile attitudes". Australian governments and their public have consistently been annoyed by their perception of an "attention Gap", or a disproportion between the attention given the affairs of the patron by the client, and the attention given the client by the patron. This generates "feelings of

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1. Ibid., pp11-15.

irritation" over the patron's supposed indifference; the idea that the patron "lacks a sense of proportion" by not giving his client what it feels to be its due; and the sense of "being discriminated against", in that 'difficult' clients seem to be given special favour to get them in the club, whilst those already in get nothing extra to reassure them of their value. Like Japan, Australia has to overcome its *amae* feeling toward the US. Unlike Japan, Australia has to do this simply to assert, rather than to magnify, its independent identity.

#### WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

##### The Search for Security

Australia's search for security within the embrace of regionally interested, but geographically removed, major powers is a history of unfulfilled expectation based on unrealistic appreciation of the realities of international relations. Australian expectations of its relationship with the United States have consistently exceeded actual outcomes; chiefly because Australia consistently overrates the importance of what it discerns (or has discerned) to be the principle intangible component of that relationship: an emotional bond that transcends the harsh practicalities of national interest. Which is to say, Australia's expectations of the United States have been derived in the past, and I believe still are today, from a basis of emotion rather than logic.

The basis for today's military security pact with the United States remains, as it was in 1950, something emotionally

sensed rather than rationally identified. In the 1940s through to the late 1960s, it was a sense of mateship; in the 1970s and since, it has been the sense of partnership. In the years up to (and into the early stages of) World War II, Australian expectations were based on a sense of kinship. And all of this within an embracing idea of membership of first an Anglo -Saxon and then a more broadly-defined 'western community' of nations.

It's sensations and emotions have consistently played Australia false - unsurprisingly, since they have fluctuated so greatly in intensity of both outward manifestation and inner conviction. This is in itself 'no accident'. Just as the idea of an Imperial Union of all the countries of the 'white Empire' was "strategically absurd", so too is the notion of a permanent coincidence of national interest between two nations so far apart geographically, and in outlook and circumstance, regardless of any similarity of origin and national credo. Military alliance with the United States is fundamentally - irremediably - illogical.

The folly has been compounded by the growing insecurity of the United States itself. Australia's supposed protector is undergoing a crisis of confidence consequent upon the continuing erosion of its ability to dictate the terms of international relations over much of the world. As with its predecessor, Great Britain, the US is seeking with increasing desperation and illogic to shore up the old order to avoid having to undergo the many adjustments necessary to deal with a period of revolutionary

change that is sweeping the world. And like Britain, it is clinging for reassurance and assistance ever more tightly to its alliance relationships, adopting the understandable but essentially hollow argument that it is in the interests of its allies that it does so. Though the Bush Administration would strenuously deny the charge, by its continual harping on the need for "stability and security" it is apparent that the United States chief objective is to preserve so nearly as it can a facsimile of the cold war status quo in Asia, at least so far as its own position is concerned. The U.S. seeks to foster in others a sense of insecurity so as to assure itself of its power and influence; and mask its growing sense of inadequacy in the face of challenges to its former hegemonic power. It has become so accustomed to determining the actions of others that it has lost sight of the essential strategic absurdity of most if not all of its alliance relationships.

Australia's emotional perceptions have not been reciprocated to an extent where they generate reliable or even favorable responses (emotional or material) on the part of their objects. Further, the persistent resort to these emotional bases for identification of national interests and hence of an effective strategy for the national good - the national security, if you will - has quite undermined the ability and courage of Australian governments to comprehend and act upon the bare facts of national interest. Even when such rational analyses are made, seldom are they acted upon.



The nations of Asia are now maturing out of the "Post Colonial Era" - more so than into a "post Cold War Era". East Asia as a whole is becoming far more racially and ideologically assertive. From a position of either direct dependence on the good offices of the west, or at least upon the exploitation of competing western-based ideologies and power systems, a majority of East Asian nations has reached a position of self confidence from which it is prepared to 'hoe its own row', taking the initiative in international affairs rather than reacting to the actions of others.

However the US is still largely in the reactive mode that has prevailed since the inception of containment. It has no real plan for a New World Order; more a vaguely delineated hope that was itself a reaction, some way of expressing that the big ideological battle with the USSR was over, and also an attempt to 'include' Germany and Japan into basically the same US-dominated system of international relations - on US terms. This, as President Bush himself might say, will not stand. The US and its Atlantic confreres may in effect be setting the scene for a new cold war between their established club of 'haves' and power-brokers, and the rapidly developing aspirants to such status. Australia is geographically on the winning side of the Pacific; mentally, it is still linked to those who, in east Asia at least, will most likely be tomorrow's losers.

## **The Colonies: Enterprise and Enervation**

Almost from the foundation at Port Jackson\* of the colony of New South Wales, its settlers came into contact with citizens of the new English-speaking republic far across the Pacific; though those early voyagers from the United States came not from the Pacific but the Atlantic coast. Enterprising Yankee whalers and sealers soon found that, more than a haven where "a thousand ships of the line might lie in perfect safety", Port Jackson offered profit from the sale of goods of almost every description; cloth, hardware, food and (most profitable of all), rum. The colonists, dismayed by reversed seasons, the hot, dry climate and thin soil, unfamiliar diseases and the perils of drought and bushfire, could not feed themselves for many years\*.- Nor could they grow a surplus of grain for conversion into intoxicating liquor which for many was all that made tolerable life in exile from the 'green and pleasant land' which had expectorated them. The American seafarers soon developed "an infant triangular trade, breaching the East India Company's

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\* Also known as Sydney Harbour. Captain Arthur Phillip was not impressed with the site first chosen for a penal colony on the advice of Sir Joseph Banks; Botany Bay. Downcast by the "waterless and drought-stricken environment" they found, Phillip and some others sailed out to find a better site - which they did, but a few miles to the north. The Union Jack was hoisted in Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788.

\* The fact that most of the settlers were felons from the cities, and that their supervisors and jailers were mostly soldiers and sailors, did not help either. There was little practical knowledge of farming or animal husbandry amongst people who in the main, convict and jailer alike, were used to either expropriating or being issued their food and other necessities.

monopoly, ... between the United States, Australia and China."<sup>1</sup> This trade, and the activities of the whalers and sealers around the Australian coast, increased over time, especially as new settlements were founded to the north, south and west. By 1835 the United States had appointed a consul to Sydney, although Mr James H. Williams did not actually take up his duties there until 1839. Further consular appointments were made, to Hobart (1843) and to Melbourne in 1852, by which time the first Australian gold rush was well underway<sup>+</sup>.

This swelled the number of Americans in Australia, mainly with "forty-niners" continuing west from California, and with deserters from visiting whalers and merchantmen. But the bulk of the gold-rush immigrants came from Britain, Ireland and (in lesser numbers) Scandinavia and central-southern Europe. American direct influence on politics and society was limited. The indirect influence of the American example (which was especially attractive to transported English Chartists and Irish Fenians - both groups, in effect, being political prisoners) was more significant. It undoubtedly helped stoke the fires of Australian republican-nationalism, and the drafters of Australia's federal Constitution drew heavily upon both the original American Constitution and subsequent legislation, interpretations and

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1. Norman Harper, Australia and the United States, Sydney: Nelson, 1972, p1.

+ The Colonies themselves, even though they all progressively achieved self-government from 1851 onward, made no effort to reciprocate with some form of commercial representation in the United States.

amendments. But the form of government finally adopted for the Australian Commonwealth in 1901 owed much (perhaps too much) to the influence of the "mother of Parliaments" and English law. The fire in the bellies of those who agitated for an Australian republic, free from all allegiance to the British crown, was soon damped by economic depression, the continued squabbling among the individual colonies (in effect, over questions of local sovereignty, later enshrined as 'states' rights'<sup>1</sup>); and by the fears of invasion and foreign blockade that emerged and periodically recurred from the mid-nineteenth century onward.

Despite a fairly steady flow of Americans engaged in commerce, mining and civil engineering projects, and a dim awareness of a growing American national power still 'going west' into the Pacific, Australian's chief source of ideas and ideals remained (or perhaps, became once more,) the British Empire; to which most Australians continued to look for the assurance of their physical protection, commercial viability and sense of place in the world. How much more glorious to be a component of the mightiest Empire the world had ever seen, than to be a

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1. See: McLachlan, Waiting for the Revolution, pp165-9. The worst aspect of all this was the Colonies' insistence on retention of a direct link to the British Crown; in effect, retaining the avenue of appeal to a foreign government as a means of circumventing unpalatable decisions of the national one. This naturally appealed to the British. The other main difficulty that seems to have arisen was the excessive eagerness of the founders for compromise: they were "much more concerned with creating a bill acceptable to all the colonial parliaments and the one at Westminster than a document Australians could understand." It seems they already had lost the gumption to take independence if was not granted by act of the British Parliament. It was a (still) potentially fatal error.



struggling, indefensible republic locked in the fastness of the South Seas, with only the Royal Navy standing between it and perdition. Not everyone felt that way, of course. Even some British, like Rear-Admiral George Tryon, commander of the Royal Navy's Australian Squadron, urged the colonial Premiers to at least provide, at their own expense, naval forces for local defence which (unlike the Australia Squadron) would be directly responsible only to themselves<sup>1</sup>. And on a wider plane, there still were many who felt the only way ahead for Australia was complete independence, American-style.

### Internal Ideological Conflict

The British interests in Australia worked hard to counter such disloyal tendencies and cultivate Imperial sentiment, encouraging Australians not to dwell upon their shadowy pasts as outcasts and refugees from the British and other empires, but to celebrate their future as (moderately acceptable) citizens of an ever-greater *Bretagne d'Outre-Mer*. In the words of Robert Hughes, the 1888 Centenary celebration of English settlement in Australia was:

conceived and [run] as a lavish feast of jingoism, a tribute to the benevolent, all-embracing British Empire [and its markets, its Monarchy, and its Navy]... Bunting, flags, parades, speeches and more bunting were rammed down the popular throat, and only republicans gagged on them. ... *The Bulletin*, that anti-imperialist paper, ... excoriated the whole idea of the Centennial as a slavish feast of Australian dependence.

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1. Neville Meaney, The Search For Security in the Pacific, 1901-1914, Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976, p55.

The *Bulletin* lamented the fact that the "fifth-rate drunk" being conducted celebrated not, as in "the great Republic", a "triumph of liberty over grasping tyranny" but "a name but not a nation, a huge continent content to be the hanger-on of a little island". Dominated by British capital and its eager supplicants, the colonial governments and the 'bunyip aristocracy'<sup>1</sup> of pastoralists and miners, Australia's "chains of iron are merely exchanged for chains of gold." Australia already was choosing comfort over self-respect, and thus, according to the *Bulletin*, was still an unresisting prisoner of Britain "meaner [in spirit] than Egypt and lower [still, in courage] than the Boer Republic." The flaming spirit of independence and will to go it alone, ("poor [but] independent") behind these words, sadly was all but extinguished in but a few years<sup>2</sup>. What spirit remained was (in my view) even more sadly transmuted into rabid trade unionism, where the 'them versus us' of genuine nationalism versus suffocating  
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1. A bunyip is a monster of Aboriginal legend, that reputedly haunted waterholes. The term "bunyip aristocracy" refers to a proposal by William Charles Wentworth, one of Australia's first self-made 'landed gentry', for a system of colonial peerages on the British model. According to a published report. Wentworth was derided by Irish-born nationalist Daniel Deniehy in these terms: "Here they all knew the common water mole was transformed into the duck-billed platypus, and in some distant emulation of this degradation, he [Deniehy] supposed they were to be favoured with a bunyip aristocracy." See: G.A. Wilkes, A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms, Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1978; repr. Fontana Paperback, 1980.

2. See: Robert Hughes, The Fatal Shore, Sydney: Collins, 1987, pp596-9. For further discussion of nationalism and the Australian character, Noel McLachlan's quirkily written (it reads like the lecture notes it probably was based upon) but perceptive and informative "Waiting for the Revolution" is the best I have yet read. It is written from a "social justice" perspective which he calls 'radical'; but I don't think the one need necessarily imply the other.

Empire became the tendentious pursuit of 'workers (the wage-slaves of Empire) versus the bosses (warders of the Imperial economic prison)'; which continues to undermine attempts to modernise the nation - from both sides of the mutually self-imposed 'fence' between the two.

It seems that, although the push for national self-government continued unabated until eventually it was delivered through the benevolence of the British Parliament, a majority of Australians remained unconvinced of their fledgling nation's ability to achieve a secure prosperity as an independent political entity. And so, although "inevitably [Australia's] founding fathers drew on the American experience and looked to the American constitution" as a "classical example of federal government", few of them, or their countrymen, "had anything like a profound knowledge or understanding of America. None had any first-hand knowledge of American Government"<sup>1</sup> or of American society. This proved to be a critical shortcoming.

Less critically, for Americans, the reverse also was true. In fact, given federated Australia's rather peculiar status (after 1901) as a 'self-governing Dominion' of the British Crown, it is doubtful that all that many Americans would have been  
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1. Harper, pp7-8. Also see: McLachlan, Waiting for the Revolution; Chapters 3,4 &5 draw on a wide range of contemporary sources from 19th century Australia to illustrate the origins and fluctuating intensity and directions of Australian nationalist feeling. It seems the chief weapons of the Imperialist-propagandists were to cultivate self-doubt and appeal to "race solidarity" as a means of maintaining the imperial grip on Australian policy and, indeed, daily business.

inclined to regard Australia as an independent nation in its own right. And although Australians would always be receptive to some American ideas, there were some not so subtle differences in ideals between the two societies; and these remain extant to this day. These social-ethical differences have been commented upon by any number of observers from both sides of the Pacific, and their tenor remains remarkably consistent in its essentials.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental expression of these differences may lie in an observation (whose origin I don't recall) that Australia, settled almost two centuries after North America, was infused with the liberal-egalitarian values of Bentham, whereas America was driven by the hard-faced libertarianism of Locke. Maybe: Australia's lack of land borders, of French and Spanish influence; its very distance from the source of settlement and capital\*; its location in the 'wrong' hemisphere; the existence of a formidable desert

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1. See, for example, the commentaries quoted in Harper, Australia and the United States. The list of "brickbats and bouquets" varies more according to the temper of the times than in the basic characteristics. Perhaps geography, 'the bones of strategy' is also the skeleton of national identity.

\* As McLachlan notes (p18), it took Phillip and his convoy 8 months to get to Australia in 1787-8; it took the harrowed Pilgrim Fathers 9 weeks to get to America in a fearful crossing in 1619. The time ratio even today is little different. The disincentives to self-motivated migration (especially in comparison to the contemporary competitor, the much closer United States) are obvious. Herein lie the origins of Australia's "assisted immigration" schemes, run since colonial times, by which the various governments actually paid people's fares to Australia (and which did nothing for competitive shipping services, obviously).



stretching almost across the continent (both ways)<sup>+</sup>; all these contributed to the difference as well. And while in the early 19th century the whole of the Americas was ablaze with revolution against its colonial masters, in Australia's neighbourhood, the business of colonisation was still taking place almost until the Second World War.

### **Misconstrued Inspiration**

Perhaps most critically for Australia, its political leaders, and the agitators from left, right and centre who supported or opposed them, failed especially, for all their study of the legal form of American Independence, to understand that the most critical steps in the rise of America as a nation were taken in the years immediately after 1786. It was America's great good fortune to be guided with brilliance and perseverance by a small and, it seems, from this distance of years, almost unique assemblage of extraordinarily perspicacious and intellectually gifted men - whose ability to see things plain, and work to make the best of their circumstances, stood in stark contrast to the often wishful and wistful hope for a 'kinder, gentler' environment that characterised so many Australian-British in the imperial autumn of the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods.

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+ McLachlan calls it the world's largest natural *cordon sanitaire*. Not a bad description, especially since to the north it gives way to jungle, and to westward, much of it meets the sea. And as Robert Hughes observes (The Fatal Shore, p596) , "space, in America, had always been optimistic; the more of it you faced, the freer you were - "Go West, young man!" In Australian terms, to go west was to die, and space itself was the jail."

For all their study of the technical steps taken to consolidate *de jure* American arrogation of self government *de facto*, Australia's foundling<sup>1</sup> fathers never grasped the *spirit* of the thing. It may be that "Bryce's *American Commonwealth* [was] their Bible", and that "four fifths of the Constitution was quarried from American legislation and decisions": but it was sterile stuff, prose without the passion, without the sense of the currents and eddies of popular controversy and contemporary perceptions that would have lent it real life. No book, written by and for Britons, could have given its readers the real perception of what an enormous step it was to sever all ties with the past and rely for the future on little more than the conviction it must be better and the determination to make it so - regardless of regret or lingering sympathy. Australia never found itself a George Washington, since in the circumstances a guerrilla general was not required; but it certainly could have done (and still could do) with someone who had studied and comprehended his Farewell Address. There, not in the dusty tomes of the Supreme Court, or the dry pages of a home-mechanic's guide to government; there was embodied and distilled the spirit of independent nationhood. In a few short pages, Washington managed to say what countless reports and White Papers have gravely, and vainly, struggled toward - and, in the same spirit as the Australian Constitutional drafters, ultimately shied away from.

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1. I use the word advisedly. "Independent" government was something that just turned up one day, like something that fell off the back of a truck - one driving between Westminster and Whitehall.

And for this reason it is worthwhile to repeat a decent portion of Washington's most enduring legacy to his nation - a sound, commonsense basis for conducting its affairs, both internally and with other nations. Since my focus is on the damage done Australian security policy by dependence on great power patronage and preference, one need only recount here those portions of the Farewell Address bearing most directly upon foreign relations:

The unity of government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home; your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee, that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth ...

Citizens by birth or choice of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections.... Let me ... warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally. ... in [governments] of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy...

It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another .... It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to government through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and will of one country, are subjected to the policy and will of another. ....

... nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded ... The nation, which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty or its interest.

So likewise ... sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where [none] exists, and infusing into one the enmities of another, betrays the former into [the] wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. ... And it gives to ambitious, corrupted or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) facility to betray, or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity ...

Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the confidence and applause of the people, to surrender their interests....

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world. ... let [any existing] engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But ... it would be unnecessary and unwise to extend them. ... we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal political intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favours and preferences .... constantly keeping in view, that it is folly for one nation to look for disinterested favours from another; that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept ...; that by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favours and yet [be] reproached with ingratitude for not giving more.

There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate upon, real favours from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard ....<sup>1</sup>

Looking over these few sentences culled from a wealth of plain truth, is apparent that in recent times - certainly since -----

1. Washington's Farewell Address, 1796. In: Richard D. Hefner, A Documentary History of the United States, New York: Mentor, 1991 (5th edition), pp62-9. The circumstances of the previous eight years, which only emphasise the absolute wisdom of Washington's observations and adjurations, are outlined in Hefner, pp59-62.



the Second World War in Europe, since well before then in East Asia - the United States consistently has violated both the letter and the spirit of the Farewell. The former violated perhaps more readily than the latter. But it is easily forgotten - especially in Australia, where these principles were never even tried - that particularly in its foreign dealings, American policy was in its essence formulated strictly in accord with the idea of foreswearing habitual fondness or habitual animosity toward other nations. And thus the nation was able, by and large, to maintain the sort of freedom in foreign affairs that Viscount Palmerston was urging upon his parliamentary colleagues in the mid-nineteenth century:

We have no eternal allies and no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal, and those interests it is our duty to follow.

During the heyday of the British Empire, Britain's own policies corresponded as closely to the dictums of Washington (as clearly endorsed by Palmerston) as did those of the United States itself. Britain had no "permanent alliances" with anyone - today's enemy was tomorrow's friend; and vice-versa. Cold-eyed (not synonymous with cold-hearted) realism was the order of the day; and the world was as peaceful then perhaps as ever it had been - or will be in future. All knew where they stood - on shifting sands. None thought it unusual.

Correlli Barnett has suggested that the rot set in with growth in Britain of evangelical religion. There is something in this, allowing that one of the new religions was that so drearily

recorded in the Gospel of Karl Marx. The independent and quarrelsome English:

now evinced a compassion for the underdog and a sympathy for failure, a corresponding suspicion of ability and success, that were unparalleled in other countries ....

It seemed that:

... appeasement indeed had become a conditioned reflex of the British middle and upper classes. Few would now say with Palmerston that the practical and sagacious thing to do in life was to carry a point by boldness: knock an opponent down at once, and apologise afterwards if necessary to pacify him.

This may have been "wholly beneficent" to British life at home, but it was no basis for the conduct of foreign policy:

And so, in applying the qualities of gentleness, trustfulness, altruism and a strict regard for moral conduct to a field of human activity where cunning, cynicism, opportunism, trickery and force, all in the service of national self-interest, still held sway, the twentieth-century British stood disarmed and blinded by their own virtues.<sup>1</sup>

It was Australia's misfortune that much of its population, and the bulk of its powerful domestic interests were disposed, thanks to British "cunning, cynicism, opportunism, trickery and (economic-industrial) force" to blindly believe in the advertised qualities of British "gentleness, truthfulness and altruism". Most of its leaders also cynically manipulated Australian opinion to a point where, even when the fact stood in glaring

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1. Corelli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, pp48-9.

contradiction of the expressed sentiment, the public wished to believe, and so could not bring itself to disagree that Australia's entwining with Britain was in its own best interests. Australia, like Britain a bit later and then America a bit later still, got preoccupied too much with "what could and should be done" to remedy *la Condition Humaine*; and not at all enough with answering Lenin's more brutal question: "what is to be done?"; right here, right now, to improve our present position and future prospects.

These are circumstances. The effects are best reflected in the relationship that developed between Australia and the United States, in the sometimes impenetrable shadow of Great Britain. It is a story of Australia's Great Expectations of great intangibles as substance of international relations - expectations all unrealised; and all still persisted with "too long for what good [they] have done". In its own peculiar way, Australia's story is that of modern Japan; of fluctuating, often conflicting and confusing, emotional sensations of *taikoku ishiki* and *amae*: of "big country consciousness" and "small child dependence".

Barnett has also pointed out that, on any rational assessment of environment and circumstance : "no small nations would have **chosen** as a protector a great power 12,000 miles away; conversely, no great power would have **chosen** to incur the liability of weak allies on the other side of the globe." So why did they do it? And why do they persist with it? I think the answer lies fundamentally with the fears and hopes that developed in Australia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

when it was still very much part of the British Empire; as was much of its neighbourhood. And its nearest neighbour was then the Netherlands East Indies.

Two imperatives dominated the political-military outlook of the colonial masters of the 'mystic Orient': to prevent their competitor powers from gaining a commercial or strategic upper hand through occupation of suitable pieces of real estate. And, to maintain, by any means, their tenuous grasp upon what they had, in the face of simmering resentment from numerically huge indigenous populations whose fortunes were beholden to the wish and whimsy of a comparatively tiny number of European and American overlords. The attitudes toward the question of security in Australia were largely developed in, and conditioned by this conceptual framework of territorial denial and holding back the "Asian tide".



CHAPTER 2  
EVOLVING SECURITY PERCEPTIONS TO 1918:  
WHITE AUSTRALIA AND THE DELUSION OF ANGLO-SAXON SOLIDARITY

In 1986 the Australian Government released a report entitled "Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities"<sup>1</sup>. Its author, Paul Dibb, advocated as the basis for his force structure proposals a concept of defence that he termed a "Strategy of Denial". This was hailed in some quarters as a conceptual watershed; and in some others, condemned as plain stupid. Whatever its merits, the idea certainly was no watershed. In one guise or another, the denial to competing influences and powers of the Australian landmass and adjacent portions of the globe has been fundamental to all facets of Australian security policy, almost from the time of the first British settlement.

Denial by acquisition gave way to denial by regulation; which eventually was succeeded by what might be termed "denial of cognition": the creation of a mental fortress Australia that simply pretended it could shut out the reality of its physical and political environs.

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1. Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister for Defence by Mr Paul Dibb. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986. Referred to hereafter as "Dibb".

## THE COLONIAL ERA

### Denial By Acquisition

Denial of territory was the basis for British settlement in parts of the continent far removed from Sydney Cove, on what was more a less a 'come in handy' principle. There might be little overt attraction, but who knew what might come in handy in a future conflict with, say, France - or Russia, or the Netherlands, or almost anyone. And in any case, it was more important to deny any putative adversary access to convenient harbours from which to mount raids on British possessions and shipping. This was an understandable attitude, given the havoc wreaked by Suffren in the Indian Ocean during the Napoleonic Wars - although the French expeditions to Australia during that time had been cordially received.

Nonetheless, Britain after the Napoleonic wars seemed determined to ensure that it would preempt by physical occupation any French claim on the Australian continent which might be laid on the basis of "prescriptive rights" deriving from original discovery. Hence the establishment in 1826 of a garrison at Albany, and foundation of the Swan River Colony (both in Western Australia) in 1829.\* Whilst this territory was being denied to

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\* After William Dampier's voyages in the late 17th century, which tended to corroborate earlier Dutch accounts of the land as worthless and its inhabitants as wretched, Britain had no interest in Western Australia. Following St Allouarn's 'discovery' of "Leeuwinland" in 1772, the French were the only serious explorers of the west coast (and much of the south-west) until well after 1800. But unlike the British, "they did not rush to establish settlements ... before they sent settlers to live in

France, similar efforts were underway in the north, supported by the British Admiralty

if only [to anticipate] any moves the Dutch might make to establish themselves on the north coast. British claim ... would be made doubly sure by the occupancy.<sup>1</sup>

Neither settlement prospered - the western Australian settlers actually asked to have convict labour sent them, and the garrison communities set up in various locations in the north had all to be abandoned. It took the invention of the telegraph and the undersea cable finally to force a permanent settlement at Port Darwin (still known, then, as Palmerston) in 1872.\*

#### Denial by Regulation - Race Patriotism

The principle of denial of Australian and adjacent territory to potentially competing European powers was later complemented by one of the most pernicious notions to permeate Australian political thought. Samuel Johnson observed that "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel"; Australia's  
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...Continued...

strange places abroad they invariably made careful methodical surveys of the resources." However, "the trouble with this was, as in the case of western Australia, by the time they acquired the knowledge, others had moved in ...". The story of French exploration is well told by Leslie Marchant, France Australe, (Perth: Artlook Books, 1982)

1. Peter G. Spillett, Forsaken Settlement, Sydney: Lansdowne Press, 1972, p13.

\* Some settlement from inland had taken place, but it was still pretty marginal and no less liable than before to fold up if the seasons went badly. The telegraph meant that permanent settlement had to be maintained, if only to tend the lines. See Alan Powell, Far Country. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982. Chapters 3 and 4.

scoundrels, their lukewarm nationalism subverted by Imperial dependency, opted for racial patriotism. This concept, so admirably suited for denial of the risks and responsibilities of independent nationhood, tainted and distorted Australian security policies (and the national image abroad) for over a century - even to this day. It was a logical outgrowth of "race destiny" - the assumption that all good white people could and should stick together in their common destiny of enlightening the peoples of the world - combining elements of social Darwinism, Christian missionary zeal and a form of white supremacist *noblesse oblige* to provide a quasi-philosophical underpinning for the domination of much of the world by the European powers and later the United States.

Within the British Empire, of course, this notion (which, with its own special flavouring of belief in the superiority of its social and political structures, became prevalent at the time in the United States as well<sup>1</sup>) was applied as a belief in a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon mission to elevate the lesser peoples placed under its benevolent rule by the laws of natural selection. For its adherents, it was no less self-persuasive than French colonialists' notion of the *mission civilisatrice* - but

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1. Racialist sentiment, and action, was at least as well-developed in California as in the Australian colonies. Although President Theodore Roosevelt was at first prepared to regard Japan as a friend of the United States, he became something of a yellow peril man himself. But he handled things with a good deal more finesse than did Australia's would-be statesmen. See: Robert Dallek, The American Style of Foreign Policy, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp52-3.



the 'Anglo' version was decidedly lacking both the charm and the panache of France's attempt to make its colonial subjects 'coloured Frenchmen'. The British were not interested in assimilation, because they did not believe it could work on any significant scale. Americans thought the same. So did Australian whites - there long enough, and the aboriginal peoples sufficiently subjugated, to believe that they were the living definition of 'Australian'. By 1857 there were in Australia nearly 24,000 Chinese working on the goldfields of Victoria.<sup>1</sup> As was the case in America, their industry<sup>2</sup> and their 'alien' customs sparked fear and loathing which resulted in a number of ugly instances of violence against them by the white miners. This culminated in a brutal pogrom at Lambing Flat in 1861, by which time the colonial governments had convinced themselves that the Chinese and other 'Asiatic' races could not be assimilated into

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1. Manning Clark, A Short History of Australia, Ringwood (Melbourne): Penguin, 1986 (repr. 1988), p115. An unknown number also resided in New South Wales; Lambing Flat is in this state, not far from the Australian Capital Territory.

2. They were, as in the American west, "patient enough to glean what the white men scorned" and were persecuted accordingly. The rise of the "White Australia" sentiment almost exactly paralleled, in time and measure, the development of the Exclusion Laws, and the feelings that gave rise to them, in California. See, for example, Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope, pp50&52, and especially, pp 265-8. The prevailing view of the potential merit and status of the Chinese is made plain by the quoted statement from the California Farmer of 1854: "[the Chinese will] be to California what the African has been to the South." As happened in Australia too, it is noted by Pomeroy that "criticism of the Chinese mounted in hard times, when the unemployed felt it was wrong that jobs should go to men who lived on handfuls (sic) of rice"; that is, to men who could get by (and even repatriate money) on less than what was considered 'fair' by the unemployed whites. A sentiment still echoing, one fancies, through the U.S. Congress and other western parliaments.

white societies, whose mores, social stability and standards of living inevitably would be undermined. Preservation of social harmony (and wages and prices) thus was made inseparable from preservation of "racial purity", and the white Australia policy was born in fact if not yet in name.<sup>1</sup> The twinned visions of "mission" (or "race destiny") and White Australia were intertwined with the notions of "territorial denial" of the "indefensible continent"; mutually reinforcing in a way that ever since has plagued Australian attempts to formulate a sensible national security policy. Out of all this came the two main strands of an embryonic Australian national security policy, in which the United States increasingly would figure as a key factor.

The first strand was a form of neo-colonial Monroe doctrine espoused by colonial politicians from at least the 1870s. The second, which grew concurrent with the other but took longer to reach full flower in policy terms, was that of the Yellow Peril, later known as the 'gravity theory', by which Asia's teeming hordes, with an insatiable thirst for land, would drop from the north and into the vast spaces of Australia. Both of these affected Australia's view of the United States, even if the United States remained more or less indifferent to events in Australia, and deferential to the British desire to speak first

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1. The term was apparently first used in campaigning for Australia's first Federal election, held 1 March 1901. Such was the fervour for exclusion of Asian immigrants that a British caution against an overtly discriminatory immigration policy caused arch-Imperialist W.M. Hughes to call for "separation" from the Empire; i.e., for a Republic. See: Meaney, p111.

(and last) on all matters affecting its imperial constituents, whatever their racial status.

### **The South Pacific Monroe Doctrine**

The demand for a "Monroe Doctrine for the South Pacific" (such was not necessary for the already apportioned, western-dominated areas of South and East Asia) grew from Australians' fears that great power rivalry for territory and influence in the South Pacific would necessarily mean extension to the region of northern hemisphere conflicts. And with this would come threats to Australia's trade and territory.<sup>1</sup> It was not inconceivable to some that part or all of Australia itself might be 'bargained away' by Britain in return for some other concession thought more vital to English interests.\* Internal troubles in Fiji in 1870, in which both Germany and the USA had some commercial interest, prompted the Australian colonies to ask Britain to annex the Fiji islands for fear that either of the other two nations might do so first.

They represented that it would be inimical to "British interests" if the Fijis fell under some other nation's control. Gladstone's Liberal government was not disposed to annex the

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1. See Meaney, The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14. Chapters 1 & 2, "Problems and Perspectives" and "Colonial Origins" cover the concerns of the colonial governments, and demonstrates the vital part played in achievement of a consensus on federation by their agreement on the need for a commonly mounted system of defence.

\* And the practical example of American westward expansion by purchase, bluff and bluster may have contributed to such fears.

islands, but the Conservatives under his successor, Disraeli, were; and they did so in 1874. Certainly, "the British government was more influenced by an assessment of its own interest in the islands than by Australian pressure", but the Australian colonies were also "perhaps led by this episode into believing that they had more influence over British Pacific policy than was actually the case."<sup>1</sup>

This misconception persisted for a long time, and a similar one later arose with regard to Australian influence on United States policy in the region - and elsewhere. Encouraged by their apparent success, the Australians continued to urge Britain to swallow up virtually every remaining piece of "vacant" territory in the South Pacific; but Britain's appetite for territory was sated and it was less than thrilled by the unilateral annexation by the Government of Queensland of the eastern part of the island of New Guinea. The northern section of this unwanted windfall later was traded to Germany in return for its support of British ambitions in Egypt. Whilst making this agreement, Britain and Germany, much to the colonies' dismay, also parcelled up the remainder of modern-day Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Gilbert and Ellice group. France, too, had been allowed by Britain to consolidate its regional presence. This was not at all what had been hoped for, and the Australian colonial Premiers had not been consulted at all, either. But the colonies had not the sovereign status nor the independent force themselves to acquire

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1. Ibid., pp16-17.



these territories, in the arc from New Guinea to Fiji and Samoa, that had been identified as Australia's northern "rampart". It was clear that they had not achieved their goal of excluding all powers other than the motherland to keep "the English people in these distant lands as far removed as possible from the dangers arising out of European complications".<sup>1</sup>

These non-English were deemed by some to include the United States, which by now was clearly a serious commercial rival to Britain (and British-controlled Australian concerns) in the western Pacific as a whole. There also was a nascent strain of Australian "manifest destiny" in the air\*, which ambitious colonial politicians, thwarted already by the regional manoeuvrings of the main European powers, feared would be further frustrated by the encroachments of the United States. But in the event, the United States' acquisition of territory further afield was regarded with equanimity; even welcomed.

American victory in the Spanish-American war provoked "rapturous applause and public demonstrations of approval", and the "acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands in 1898 and of Tutuila ... in 1899 was also accepted calmly", even though  
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1. Ibid., p17. As expressed by James Service, Premier of Victoria, in 1885.

\* This actually was the phrase used, but whether in conscious or unconscious imitation of the American movement of the same name is not clear. The problem with "Australasian" manifest destiny was that it conceived Australia and New Zealand more in the role of imperial property agents than as 'powers' acting in their own right - Britain was required to do the annexing in order to fulfill "Australasia's" destiny. All very odd. See: Meaney, Chapter 1.

Tutuila was in the Samoas which formerly had been considered part of the 'backyard fence' required to be erected under British suzerainty.

By this time the notion of Anglo-Saxon "race destiny" in which the whites would inherit the earth due to their innate superiority, was firmly established and it was widely held that "the further the Americans became involved in the future of the Pacific the better were the prospects for Australian peace and safety."<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless it was apparent to all concerned that the security of Australian territory and seaborne trade (meaning in effect the national livelihood) lay chiefly in the hands of the Royal Navy, at least until such time as the nascent Commonwealth developed adequate naval forces of its own. The trouble was, as Australian politicians were increasingly aware, the Royal Navy faced a severe and growing challenge in its home waters, and had little to spare for service in faraway reaches of the Empire - whatever colour their inhabitants.

Australia's South Pacific Monroe Doctrine also had undergone a not-so-subtle transmutation: frustrated by great-power compromises, the Australians gave up on their original goal of excluding non-British "races" from the region. Australia's Monroe Doctrine shifted from its sharp focus upon the hope of excluding from the 'Australian hemisphere', through unified British rule of the Pacific island rampart, the tensions and

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1. Meaney, p22.

squabbles emanating from far-away Europe and dabbled in by the United States. Encouraged by the emergence of another Anglo-Saxon power in the Pacific, and alarmed by the rapidly growing power of Japan, Australia's regional focus deteriorated into the blurred vision of excluding from the continent and its surroundings all those inferior races who would dilute the blood and impede the manifest destiny to rule of the White Empire of the South Seas.

#### AFTER FEDERATION - PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

##### Cognitive Denial: the Yellow Peril

At federation in 1901, amid the many optimistic pronouncements could already be detected some uncertainty as to the nation's future. Despite fulsome protestation that "Australia confidently awaits the future", the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that Japan was now "a recognised naval Power", and reposed its hopes for Australian security in "that alliance of English speaking peoples which will one day hold with secure and loyal hands the balance of the world's peace in the interests of civilisation and progress."<sup>1</sup> The *Brisbane Worker* was less sanguine; Australia, "having escaped the Monarchy" (it wished!) had a higher destiny than simply marching in lockstep to the tune of "nations decayed and dying." Enough to gladden an American heart perhaps: but *The Worker* saw no merit either in the practical example of a democracy "which, like the United States,

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1. The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 January 1901. In Crowley, vol.1, pp4-5.

is based on ... money-power, ceases to be democracy and becomes plutocracy."<sup>1</sup> In Melbourne, already a bastion of conservatism (of both right and left), Imperial sycophancy prevailed - Federation had simply "confirmed our allegiance to the Crown" and forestalled the colonies becoming "ridiculous states, such as the colonies of [Latin America] have become." British was, undoubtedly, best: "no American President can hope a realm so wide extended as that [of] a federated Great[er] Britain." The American example ran a poor second to the Imperial presence and "the blood-tie and common racial instinct already proved on the battlefields of South Africa".<sup>2</sup>

But a snake lurked in Britain's antipodean Eden - not just Japan, but the whole of the Asiatic Horde. "It is good for the world" quoth the *Argus*' syndicated bigot, "that a White Empire should grow up in these Southern-Asian seas, as a counterbalance to the ... empires of China and Japan, with all their mysterious possibilities. The coloured races" - those sinister reptiles! - were "fast creeping down the Malayan Peninsula..."<sup>3</sup>. How fortunate for the world, then, that Australia would "maintain for Europe its civilisation here." The first new nation of the new Century already was set fair to become the last bastion of (British) white supremacy; which itself was under notice of challenge.

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1. The Brisbane Worker. 5 January 1901. In Crowley, vol.1, pp5-6.

2. The Melbourne Argus. 9 May 1901. In Crowley, vol.1, pp6-7.

3. Ibid.



Japanese naval power, evident in 1901, but untested except against the decadent Chinese, had nonetheless been tacitly acknowledged in the 1902 Anglo-Japanese treaty. It was shockingly confirmed in the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-5. Japan had 'arrived' as a first-class power; and the rivets were coming loose from the "iron wall" of the Royal Navy. Having now proven it possessed the professional expertise to overwhelm a substantial fleet (albeit poorly trained and of uneven material quality) from one of the world's great powers, the Imperial Japanese Navy clearly was more than a match for the relatively weak force of a few "First-Class" cruisers, light cruisers and destroyers, occasionally supplemented by one or two pre-Dreadnought battleships, that was distributed between the Royal Navy's China, East Indies and Australia Stations.

The spectre of the "Yellow Peril", formerly thought exorcised by the White Australia Policy legislated in 1901<sup>1</sup>, now was enthusiastically raised again, and not only by white supremacists and self-interested trade union leaders. Those well-intentioned souls committed to the idea of an independent

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1. For interesting samples of the debate see: Crowley, vol.1, pp13-18. The excuses offered for a White Australia corresponded closely to those invoked, before and after, in the western states of America to justify exclusion and/or expulsion of Chinese and Japanese; but at least one Parliamentarian had the perspicacity and the courage to point to the real reason underneath it all: "the foundation of the Bill is racial prejudice... The Attorney General has ...[made] the humiliating confession" that the "principal reason for shutting out the Japanese race is [that] they are too thrifty [;] they work too hard .. are too provident .. and possess so many of those old-fashioned virtues that we Britishers cannot compete with them in our daily life." How true.

Australian foreign policy, and an independent defence force to back it up, also found it a useful tool to overcome the sense of complacency that was otherwise generated by the signing of the Anglo-Japanese security treaty in 1902. The not so well intentioned also batten upon it to promote the creation of standing land forces in particular.

The real aim of those such as the local military acolytes of Major General Sir Edward Hutton, the British-appointed commander of the Commonwealth Military Forces from 1902 to 1904, was to ensure creation of a force suitable for deployment under British orders as part of an Imperial Reserve which would be used to snuff out disturbances in the non-white Empire. The "Eastern Menace" was to be brandished as posing the sort of massive invasion threat that would justify a large standing army of nearly 30,000 men.<sup>1</sup> Many Australian leaders, including those committed to the idea of an independent Navy under national command, had little faith in either the durability of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty or the ability of the Royal Navy to prevail in the event that Japan should take advantage of a conflict in Europe to further its own grand design in Asia; in which view they were wholly, if prematurely, justified. And Australian politicians doubtless were uncomfortably aware that they had

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1. See: Meaney, pp58-75.

frustrated and insulted the Japanese to the limits of human endurance when framing the Immigration Act of 1901.<sup>1</sup>

The extent of Japan's future ambition was perhaps magnified beyond reason; but that is to forget the temper of the times, in which the gaining of power, it was presumed, created a thirst for more, with one conquest leading inexorably to the attempt for another.

'Tis the first round of the struggle  
of the East against the West,  
Of the fearful war of races -  
for the White Man could not rest<sup>2</sup>

wrote "homegrown" author-poet Henry Lawson - in decidedly Kiplingesque style. Senator Pearce, a future Defence Minister, thought it "foolish" to regard the Anglo-Japanese treaty as providing any durable security for Australia, and admonished his Labour Party colleagues that Japan "has shown she is an aggressive nation" whose appetite for conquest had been stimulated, not slaked, by recent victory. It was inevitable that Japan would seek "to obtain fresh territory", for "has that not been the history of our own race?" He wondered if there was "any other country that offers such a temptation to Japan as Australia  
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1. Meaney, pp107-119, gives extensive coverage of the three-cornered arguments on the subject that almost literally "burned up the wires" between Tokyo, London and Melbourne. The Australian government, though adamant in its position, which prevailed, sought to duck continued representations from the Japanese Consul-General by insisting all correspondence on the subject should be routed through the British Foreign Office in London. Though it was tactically expedient in this case, it was a disastrous precedent for the conduct of Australian foreign policy.

2. Quoted by Alan Powell, Far Country, p140.

does?" The newly formed National Defence League considered Japan "the possible, if not the probable, enemy of the future".<sup>1</sup> The Federal Government moved to take over administration of the Northern Territory from South Australia, promising to build a north-south railroad. It was the start of the movement, honoured, like so much else (including the railroad) more in rhetoric than in deed, to 'populate or perish' in the North.<sup>2</sup>

## EASTERN MENACE

### A Glimpse of Salvation - The Great White Fleet

Future Prime Minister Alfred Deakin had ventured mildly that once engaged in China, Japan might become mired there and unable to divert its attention elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> But the victory over Russia changed all that, and Deakin was as thoroughly imbued as any with the doctrine of racial purity. In the words of the then (June 1905) Deputy Prime Minister, Allan McLean, although "the great

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1. Comment from Deakin, McLean, Pearce and the National Defence League all cited by Meaney, pp126-127.

2. The Commonwealth eventually took over in 1911 - the railway, promised most recently by Hawke in 1983, is still not built. See: Powell, Far Country, pp141-2. It is interesting to note that Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson recommended in 1911 establishment of a naval base at Darwin; but it would be useless, he said, unless connected to the south by rail. As events proved in 1942, Henderson was right - and in my view, he still is.

3. Meaney, p124. Paraphrases an interview granted by Deakin to the Sydney Morning Herald, 6 January 1904: "once established on the Asian mainland, Japan would have more than enough to hold its attention and consume its energy." This fond hope became more or less enshrined as the basis of Anglo-Australian policy toward Japan in the decade before December 1941.



Power which has recently arisen in the East" was presently allied to Britain, "that condition of things might not continue and we must be prepared for what might happen." Thus was resumed a protracted debate, both within Australia and between its representatives and those of a stubbornly obtuse British colonial office and Admiralty, in particular, over the future needs for the defence of Australia<sup>1</sup>.

It was far from resolved when Deakin, by now Prime Minister, got wind of Theodore Roosevelt's scheme to put the USA on the world Power map by sending his Great White Fleet around the globe. He "forced a reluctant colonial office to invite the American [Fleet] to Australia"<sup>2</sup>, by the simple expedient of writing "what purported to be a private letter to the American Ambassador in Britain, Whitelaw Reid, asking him to help persuade the United States Government to allow the American fleet to come to Australia."<sup>3</sup> The colonial office was furious, probably much to the satisfaction of all Australians who knew what had gone on - and in 1908 the Great White Fleet arrived, to a rapturous reception from press, public and politicians. In private, the Prime Minister considered this was "not so much because of our blood affection for the Americans though that is sincere but

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1. The whole story is well told by Meaney, The Search For Security in the Pacific.

2. T.B. Millar, Australia in Peace and War, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), p72.

3. M. Ruth Megaw, "Australia and the Great White Fleet", Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society (Sydney), No.56 (1970). Cited in Harper, Australia and the United States, p59.

because of our distrust of the Yellow Race in the North Pacific and our recognition of the 'entente cordiale' spreading among all white men who realise the Yellow Peril to Caucasian civilization, creeds and politics."

#### **A Home Truth From Admiral Sperry**

Publicly, Deakin like virtually all other commentators could scarcely contain his joy at finding some other power to take up the burden of protection of "the truth of blood and race". The whole population seemed to feel that even though they had been 'abandoned' by the mother country to an uncertain fate at the hands of Asian hordes, now 'our' Uncle Sam would put all to rights, if needed, because Australians and Americans were "blood relations". Deakin went so far as to propose an Anglo-Saxon alliance in the Pacific. He seems to have been almost alone in this desire. Politeness, pride and perhaps lingering prejudice (for all the strident claims of 'kinship' and "the meeting of broad and free democracies") all seem to have inhibited other Australian leaders from proposing outright either alliance or some other guarantee of protection.

American Admiral Sperry was in any case too shrewdly circumspect to offer the slightest hint of such a thing, though he was aware that in Australian minds his visit had "established a curious sort of protectorate - a new Monroe Doctrine."<sup>1</sup> What Sperry clearly recognised, besides his own government's aversion to permanent entanglements with any portion of the foreign world,  
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1. Meaney, p171. Quotes a letter from Sperry to his wife.

was that Australia and the United States shared few "material interests, without which *mere blood ties count for little*"(my emphasis). He told this to Deakin, and enjoined him to develop

trade in their [British] Pacific Islands, on the route to Vancouver and San Francisco [because then] the world would recognise the community of our commercial interests and would not dare affront us as long as we hold together.<sup>1</sup>

It was good advice, and applied nearly equally as well to Australian relations with Britain - there was no such thing as an international community based on blood ties, but there could be international cooperation, in security as in other matters, based on mutual interests.

Deakin, like many Australians at the time and for decades afterward, seemed not to take the hint; he issued invitations for more naval visits, and for a visit (in 1909) by the President himself. The latter offer was declined: perhaps Theodore Roosevelt, despite his belief expressed in a letter to the British King, that the interests of "the English-speaking peoples are one, alike in the Atlantic and Pacific"<sup>2</sup>, was not anxious to be identified with so blatantly and offensively racist a society. Almost alone amongst his compatriots, TR recognised "the consequences that blatant expressions of contempt for Japanese

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1. Ibid., p172.

2. Letter to King Edward VII, dated 12 February, 1908. In Barclay and Siracusa, Australian-American Relations Since 1945, p2.

migrants would have for America's international position"<sup>1</sup>; and this would have made him no less unique in Australia. A visit to Australia so soon after America and Japan had concluded the Root-Takahira agreement which formally "re-affirm[ed] their friendship" could only help revive the international tension TR hoped he had just defused.

The intense public interest and goodwill toward the United States that had been generated by Admiral Sperry and his Fleet, soon began to wane in the face of all-pervasive British influence, including a minor flood of 280,000 immigrants from the old country in the period 1909-13. Few of these settled in the north, where many considered it "unnatural to expect white people to work manually". This gave rise, paradoxically, to calls for the "White Australia fetish" to be dropped (above an Antipodean version of the Mason-Dixon line) to allow population of the very north which reputedly was threatened with imminent inundation by the Yellow Tide, by (among others) the very peoples who were supposed to be the threat. The stupidity of this proposal was not apparent to its authors in the *Pastoral Review*, who seemed to hanker for old southern-style slavery (indentured "black labour" from almost everywhere but Japan) in plantation agriculture that would permit "whites [to] live in comfort, [while] wives would have domestics".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Robert Dallek, The American Style of Foreign Policy, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1983, p55.

2. Crowley, vol.1, pp208-9.



Only in innocent Australia, cut off from the world by geography and willful subservience to the myth-makers of the British Colonial Office and jingo press, could such a suggestion have been publicly canvassed in 1914 - whatever other nations' citizens might think in private. In any case, the proposal got short shrift from a more determinedly racist Federal Government whose key constituents were concentrated in the southern cities. So did Admiral Sperry's advice to Alfred Deakin: Australia did not establish any form of trade representation in America until 1918 - and then a trade Commissioner under the wing of the British Embassy.

War scarcely modified (probably deepened) the innocence, and actually contributed to a depopulation of the north, as many of its bold young (white) men - of whom there were few enough - signed on for another great adventure from which fewer still returned.

## THE ROAD TO WAR AND "GLORY"

### "Antipathies and Passionate Attachments"

Though the Melbourne Age had in 1908<sup>1</sup> trumpeted that "the people of America [would] admit the common trust of the two white races whose destinies are bound up in Pacific dominance", in which America had shown she would "perform her part" and would expect Australia "to undertake our corresponding obligation", by 1914 American indifference and Australian passivity ensured that  
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1. The Age, Melbourne, 17 March 1908. In F.K. Crowley, Modern Australia in Documents, Volume 1: 1901-1939, pp124-5.

all sense of obligation was once more directed to the service of the Empire.

Even so, the visit of the Great White Fleet had at least one important and lasting effect. If a friendly fleet could make it to Australia, so too could a hostile one. The visit had given added point to the comment made by the Commonwealth's Naval Director in a minute to the Minister for Defence:

With many ... it is a heresy to doubt the paramount supremacy of the Mother Country's great Navy over [all others, singly or however combined] ... [but] the time is fast approaching when the existence of Australia will depend upon the goodwill of America and the politeness of Japan.<sup>1</sup>

After 1908, Australians were easily convinced they must have their own navy, rather than simply 'chipping in' towards the cost of Britain's fleet. And after more wrangling with the Imperial priesthood, God himself signed (in June 1911) the Royal assent for creation of an Australian navy, whose major units assembled in Sydney in barely the nick of time, on 4 October 1913.

Australia entered the Great War on 5 August, 1914, a day after Great Britain; and within hours of the announcement had fired what may have been the first "British" shot of the conflict\*. America was forgotten: Theodore Roosevelt had written  
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1. Captain William Creswell, who later became the Chief of Naval Staff of the Royal Australian Navy. In Barclay and Siracusa, p3.

\* From shore batteries at the entrance to Port Philip Bay (Melbourne), which prevented the attempted flight of the German merchantman *Pfalz*.

in his Autobiography, published in early 1914, that "America should be prepared to stand at Australia's back in the event of any emergency"<sup>1</sup> However, the "war to end all wars" was probably not the sort of emergency he had in mind. Australia, after all, volunteered to take part, though it seemed to have little directly at stake. Woodrow Wilson, TR's successor, was certainly of no mind to volunteer America for anything beyond 'saving' the oppressed of Mexico and Central America. No-one minded; no disappointment was expressed at its absence from the fray, because in the event American help was not needed. And it was not, after all, America's war.

The peripheral threat posed to Australian interests by spillover of the European conflict into the western Pacific and the Indian Oceans, could be quickly eliminated by Australia herself, aided not by the blood brotherhood of either Britain or the United States but by none other than the fearsome Eastern Menace. These improbable partners swiftly terminated the German presence in the Pacific.

### **Australia's "Splendid Little War"**

The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 need not, by rights, have involved either Australia or Japan. Each was far removed from both the Balkans, where the spark was lit, and from the land and ocean battlefields where the competing alliances of the Triple Entente and the Central Powers commenced to bludgeon

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1. Meaney, p260.

each other into penury and political upheaval. If the United States (and the rest of the "New World" in the Western Hemisphere), a 'mere' 3,000 miles or so across the Atlantic could stand aloof from the conflict, why not the leading power of East Asia and the only substantial nation in the South Pacific? The potential for profit was great, the scene of conflict thrice as far removed, and the causes of no particular concern.

Of course, it was more complicated than that. The United States at this time still held firmly to its "true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world"; but Japan was formally allied to the United Kingdom\*, and Australia had muffed its chance for true independence in foreign and defence policy by opting for Dominion status under the British Crown at Federation in 1901. For Australia, therefore, on this occasion as a quarter century later, because Britain had declared war on Germany, "as a result, Australia is also at war."<sup>1</sup> However, more than, respectively, mere allegiance to an ally or filial loyalty to the British Crown dictated that both Japan and Australia should take an active part in the Great War.

Both nations' interests were strongly engaged, principally because of the extensive colonial holdings of Germany in the  
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\* The 1902 Treaty had been renewed in 1911.

1. As stated in the radio broadcast on 3 September 1939 by the then Prime Minister, R.G. Menzies. In R.G. Neale (ed.), Documents in Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49: vol.II, 1939, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976. Document No. 189.



Asia-Pacific region. Japan had designs on Germany's territorial 'concessions' in China and its possessions in the North Pacific, besides having a wish to further prove itself as a worthy partner in the club of great powers still headed by Britain. Australia could expect that its sea communications and possibly its territory would be subject to attack by German naval forces operating from German possessions in Asia and the South Pacific (and possibly from the neutral Netherlands East Indies). And it still wanted German New Guinea, at a minimum. Germany's moderate naval strength in the Pacific could do little to prevent this odd couple from achieving their goals.

**"Thank God We Have Had An Australian Navy.."**

The British China squadron was of only marginal importance in this calculation. Though nominally superior to the Germans, it in fact was little more powerful\* than the squadron of Admiral Cradock, which von Spee later annihilated at Coronel. But Japan possessed the strongest Navy in the Pacific at the time. Admiral Graf von Spee's squadron could not hope to prevent the Japanese from forcibly occupying its base at Tsingtao, and would thus have to flee to another haven. There was no refuge to be had in the South Pacific, where "the fledgling Australian Navy possessed, in HMAS Australia, flagship of Admiral Patey, a brand-new  
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\* van der Vat suggests it was a worry to von Spee. But I doubt it. He would have beaten them, being smarter and his ships, faster. And as the British only later became aware, German guns far outranged those of similar bore in the Royal Navy. (Sydney, with 6 inch guns, closed to 10,000 metres from *Emden*, expecting still to be out of range of von Mueller's 105mm (4.1") pieces. She got hit.)

battlecruiser capable of destroying the entire German Squadron ... without assistance". In 1914 Patey's "British-built flagship [HMAS Australia] was the most powerful warship ... in the entire southern hemisphere."<sup>1</sup>

The German Squadron was in a nutcracker, and obliged to flee the Pacific. This was not solely due to the presence of powerful opposing fleets. By simply avoiding combat with superior forces the German Squadron might survive a war that - whatever the outcome - was expected to be 'over by Christmas'. If Schlieffen and his successors had it right, the peace would be Germany's - and it would be back to Tsingtao and probably Wei-Hai-wei to boot. Regardless, the option of *guerre de course* was open: "[von Spee had] a good chance of inflicting disproportionate damage and disruption for several weeks if not months; he had half the surface of the globe to hide in; all he needed was coal." But this he could not get, at least not in the Western Pacific, because the first act of the Australian and New Zealand governments after the outbreak of war was to mount joint  
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1. Dan van der Vat, "The Last Corsair: the Story of the Emden", London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983, p33. The light cruiser SMS *Emden* was detached from the Squadron to act as a commerce raider and general distraction to the British in the Indian Ocean. After a short but successful career in this role, *Emden* was reduced to a floating wreck by HMAS *Sydney* before driving herself aground on North Keeling Island in the Cocos group on 9 November 1914. Her Captain, Fregattenkapitan Karl von Muller, and his officers and ships' company were near-heroic figures to all who heard of their exploits, due both to their professional expertise and their chivalrous conduct. And the escape, eventually all the way back to Germany, of her landing party, (stranded ashore during the battle) in the commandeered sailing vessel *Ayesha*, added an irresistible postscript of romance and derring-do in sharp contrast to the sordid dreariness of the war in France.

operations to capture the German colonies in the south, even as the British and Japanese took care of those in the north\*.

The first combined Australian-New Zealand operation of the Great War was the occupation of German Samoa in August 1914; and the first Australians to die in the war (two officers and four seamen)<sup>1</sup> did so at Rabaul, during the Australian occupation of German New Guinea in early September. By the end of the month it was clear that von Spee was on his way out of the Pacific. Two German cruisers were still loose in the Indian Ocean, but Australia itself was secure and able to provide a more than reasonable guarantee of security to the bulk of its overseas shipping traffic. By November, destruction of the commerce-raiding German cruiser *Emden* and the effective neutralisation of her sister (*Konigsberg*) in East Africa, ensured the nation needed to do little more to keep its peace of mind than maintain naval patrols along its main shipping routes and in the vicinity of the Netherlands East Indies.

Australia had got a handsome return from its investment in a modern navy - and so had New Zealand, whose Prime Minister was

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\* But the Japanese got further south than either Britain or Australia had wished - due to a staff balls-up. Japan took over Angaur, which the Australians had assumed the British China Squadron would take care of; the British Admiralty had thought Australia would do the job. Neither did it.

1. From the joint naval-military landing parties that occupied New Britain. The RAN also lost, in still unknown circumstances, the submarine AE-1, which disappeared with all hands on 14 September 1914. See: George Odgers, RAN - An Illustrated History, (Sydney, Child & Henry), 1985, pp48-57.

moved to "thank God we have had an Australian navy in this crisis".<sup>1</sup> Its quick success in deterring, forestalling and countering German naval activity was indeed "the most eloquent and effective answer to overseas [i.e., British] critics<sup>+</sup> ... who [pre-war] condemned the self-reliant naval policy of the Commonwealth." The *Advertiser's* claim that the "powerful German warships hover[ing in the South Pacific] only left because of [their] wholesome respect for the Australian Fleet" was smug, self-satisfied, and wholly correct. For Australia and New Zealand, the war really was over 'over before Christmas'.

But the new regional power threw away the dividend of a very respectable performance in it's own "splendid little" portion of the Great War, with tragic results. *Sydney*, nemesis of the *Emden*, had been escorting (with Japanese and other Australian warships) a troop convoy bound for Egypt. While the *Advertiser* crowed of Australia's regional success, the government sent the bulk of the Navy to join Jellicoe's Grand Fleet. Regional victory was subverted by capitulation to the Imperial pleasure. The rot had set in earlier in 1914, when Prime Minister Joseph Cook had pledged Britain 20,000 men in the event of war - four years later, thrice that number of Australians were dead and another quarter-million wounded. The successes in the Southern hemisphere

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1. Reported in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, 11 November 1914. In Crowley, vol.1, p228.

+ Chief among these was Winston S. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1911-15. His relationship with Australia, extending over more than half a century, was not a happy one - even Menzies couldn't stand him.



were soon all but forgotten - the nation celebrated, instead, "glorious sacrifice" in the killing fields of the north.

## LOST VICTORY

### Slave to its Affection

The 25th April is a public holiday in Australia. It has been every year since it was first observed in 1925, on the tenth anniversary of the day that Australia became "at last a nation, with one heart, one soul and one thrilling aspiration."<sup>1</sup> The national equivalent of the 4th July in the United States, or Bastille Day in France? Hardly. The parades and church services, the barbecues and race meetings, celebrate not the casting off of an oppressive foreign yoke, nor the overthrow of a domestic despot, but the slaughter and maiming in a futile and appallingly conducted campaign, of over 33,000 of "those marvelous young men [from Australia and New Zealand who] were the flower of this world's manhood"<sup>2</sup>. ANZAC Day, as it known, is the anniversary of the landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (along with much larger British and French forces) on the Gallipoli Peninsula in an attempt to force the Dardanelles, knock Turkey out of the Great war, open a southern flank against the Central

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1. This written in a 1916 editorial: "ANZAC Day: the Birth of a Nation", The Freeman's Journal. Quoted by McLachlan, Waiting For the Revolution, p191.

2. According to the English poet John Masefield, who shared with rather too many bards of his time a ridiculously romantic vision of the glory of war and human sacrifice: "they went like kings in a pageant to imminent death", he wrote in his book Gallipoli (London, 1916). Cited by McLachlan, p195(n).

Powers and - who knew what? To Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, the strategic possibilities were "almost limitless"; the Dardanelles "fascinated, then obsessed him."<sup>1</sup>

"You are simply eaten up with the Dardanelles and cannot think of anything else" wrote Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher, the First Sea Lord, to his youthful political master on 5 April: "Damn the Dardanelles! They will be our grave!" So they were. Churchill was the major political casualty, thrown out of the cabinet six weeks later, when Allied dead and wounded already numbered in the tens of thousands. By January 1916, the hopelessly botched enterprise concluded with a perfectly executed evacuation; and Fisher's prophecy had been fulfilled for 58,000 men. Of these, almost 7600 were Australians. Not for the last time, a Churchillian obsession had extracted a heavy Australian payment. When the carnage ceased with the Armistice on 11 November 1918, over 52000 more 'marvelous young men' from Australia had perished in the sands of Araby and the mud of France; the lives of perhaps a hundred thousand more blighted by mutilation and disfigurement. This was a grievous price to pay for a fledgling nation of some 4.5 millions to step "in one moment ... into the worldwide arena in the full stature of great manhood", as one British correspondent-propagandist put it - let alone that those who were lost forever, through death, maiming or derangement had been drawn chiefly from that small cohort of the

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1. John Laffin, Damn the Dardanelles, Melbourne: Sun Papermac, 1985, p21.

'best and the brightest' of its young men. Without their energy and imagination "great manhood" could hardly be sustained in the future.

Not that the "magnificent achievement" of dying in droves brought any lasting benefit, apart from a grudging acknowledgment of their unequalled fighting qualities from British brasshats who nonetheless did not appreciate Australian troops' 'undisciplined' tendency to pay more heed to commonsense and ability than to orders and rank<sup>1</sup>. The all-volunteer Australians were of course proud and jealous of their reputation as resourceful and determined shock-troops; their adversaries both feared and respected them<sup>2</sup>, the folks back home lionised them. But many must have wondered, as did Australian war correspondent (and later, official historian) C.E.W. Bean, "whether we should not be better .pa  
served in all future dealings to be independent of these

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1. "The problem of leadership of men of this class was of course an exceedingly difficult one ... [because] every second man was a potential leader. On the field the private or the corporal found the opportunity and seized it [and] capacity soon became the basis of promotion. [But officers were not elevated] into membership of a permanent caste in which advancement was automatic. The officer was the subject of scrutiny from above and a never ceasing suffrage from below ... [those] found impossible were ignored by their men ... [and almost always] removed. The weeding out of officers was drastic but in the end there was not a finer lot of battle leaders in the world... [Thus] The Australian Army was in real fact a democratic army - democratic in the highest sense because it solved the problem of leadership." Round Table, London, March 1919. In Crowley, vol.1, p313.

2. Ibid. The Germans thought them "... First Class Storm Troops. The German lines opposite the Australians had during the last months to be manned by volunteers."

British people" in order that "we should get more respect out of them."<sup>1</sup>

### Conscription: "One Part Against Another"

A very substantial body of Australian opinion\* remained unconvinced of any obligation to take part in what was essentially a European war. Britain's use of Australian soldiers convalescing in Dublin to help put down the 1916 Easter Rebellion did not help matters. The Australian Labor Party was rent asunder by the controversy between the Imperial Hawks and what might be called the "Australia-first" faction. But even before this, Prime Minister W.M. Hughes had fanned the flames of dissent during his visit to London in early 1916; the British 'got to' him<sup>2</sup>, and he was thereafter the foremost advocate of both conscription and of an Empire bound together by formal arrangement. "We don't like the Imperialism that our little man is pouring out, to the great joy of gouty aristocrats and dyspeptic millionaires" thundered the *Australian Worker* in Sydney (it seems Hughes had no monopoly  
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1. McLachlan, p200. Quotes Bean's 13 August 1916 diary entry, as cited by T. Morris, The Writings of C.E.W. Bean in France in 1916, Melbourne B.A. Thesis, 1985. Bean was by this time thoroughly exasperated by British censorship and propaganda, besides their usual haughty condescension towards 'colonials' whom they expected to do as they were told by their wiser Imperial 'parents'.

\* Most notably - but by no means exclusively - in the Irish-Catholic population and the labour movement.

2. A forceful, eloquent and often witty speaker (in other words, a great entertainer), Hughes was in great demand to address public gatherings. Intoxicated, it seems, by his reception, he grew progressively more bellicose in tone - and was known as "darling of the jingoes". See "Legal Ties or Free Sentiment", in Crowley, vol.1, p216.



on colourful language). The Commonwealth Government already had the power to conscript young men for military service overseas, but clearly feared the electoral consequences. The matter (a request for the moral rather than the legal right) was put to public referendum in 1916, and, albeit narrowly, defeated. In 1917, it was rejected again. The margin still was narrow, but the fact remained: over half the electorate was against being compelled to serve in Britain's war.

The Prime Minister argued from the basis of Imperial need, and also invoked a tactic used nearly 75 years later by America's President Bush - criticism of the policy was disloyalty to the troops already in the field. And he hit the race button - "craven desertion" of the Empire would not only be "[untrue] to the men of ANZAC" but to "the traditions of our race". Britain's "great Generals Robertson [!] and Haig [!!]", its "great leaders on the spot"<sup>1</sup> had solemnly assured Hughes the war was lost without a couple of hundred thousand Australian conscripts. The place to defend the White Australia Policy was in Europe; the defeat of Germany (now reduced to par with the "darkies", "chinks" and "japs"?) was the only way to ensure "the future of Australia - free and white". It was an hysterical and illogical response to the measured statement of Catholic Archbishop Mannix (itself in response to the bloodthirsty cries coming from the Anglicans) that:

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1. See: The Conscription Debate, in Crowley, vol.1, pp266-72.

"conscription in Australia [could] cause more evil than it would avert. I honestly believe that Australia has done her full share and more ... later on, many who are now [conscription's] loudest advocates would [resist] the taxation necessary to redeem our obligations to the returned soldiers or to their widows and orphans... [and] my good sense does not allow me to believe that the addition of 100,000 or 200,000 conscript Australians to the 15 [millions] of fighting men [already available] could be a deciding factor or even a substantial factor in the issue of the war."<sup>1</sup>

Prime Minister Hughes, for his trouble, was thrown out of his own Party in November 1916 - but survived at the head of government by crossing the floor and taking with him support from those 'labour men' who felt they could not "refuse to reinforce the heroic ANZACS". The "little Digger" continued to dig Australia's political grave and tried on the electorate again in 1917, when the British, French and Russians between them had contrived to slaughter with barely a discernible purpose a goodly portion of their 15 millions of fighting men. Voluntary enlistment had fallen by nearly 60% - news of the stupidity of the Empire's "greatest Generals" was getting home regularly by now with wounded diggers, nullifying the best efforts of the Imperial censors and their many willing propagandists in the press. Even the *Bulletin*, gulled by the 'glory' at Gallipoli, had long since had its radical teeth pulled . Hughes wanted 7,000 men per month - the number of casualties demanded it, he said, inadvertently revealing the scale of the butcher's bill for defence of White Australia before the Gates of Paris. New enemies were found within - "pernicious ... I.W.W.-ism" and "sinister and

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1.Ibid., pp270-1.

disloyal ... Sinn Feiners" were sapping the fighting spirit of the half million men (aged 18 to [!]44) who remained fit to fight. This was about the same number that Haig had managed to use up in 5 months of 1916 in the battles of the Somme.

Mannix reacted rather less coolly than in the previous year, condemning Hughes' "utterly silly statements" and asking "were all the soldiers at the front who had last time voted 'NO' [also] enemies within the gates?"; not to mention over 50% of the people as a whole. He then got quickly to the crux of the matter: give Hughes and his so-called "loyalists" what they sought, and become "henceforth puppets in the hands of those who happened to rule." Enough was enough: Australia had done "as well as any two" other Dominions, and the best thing it could do now was keep up the supply of food to the European allies. If bigotry and sectarianism were dispensed with, Mannix said, voluntary recruiting would suffice to meet reasonable demands. Hughes lost again. The formidable Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne had even turned the tide of opinion, in the bastion of the Eastern conservative establishment, from "YES" in 1916, to "NO" in 1917.<sup>1</sup>

### **National-Imperial Schizophrenia**

The heat generated by the conscription debates, and the intensification of public opposition, might have suggested an equally strong rejection of Australia's 'alliance by implication'

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1. The Diggers themselves were only marginally (a plurality of 2.45%) in favour of the idea: if you'd volunteered, you couldn't complain about the mess you'd landed in. But *compulsion* to serve in other than home defence was, to many, not on.

with Great Britain. Yet, paradoxically, much of the Australian public seems also to have convinced itself that it had witnessed a wonderful thing: the decimation of Australian youth had somehow elevated Australia in mother's sight from bastard offspring to favoured son. Though some had openly doubted - even opposed - the wisdom of involvement in "the mad drama in Europe", the majority from both sides of politics had felt Australia could not "evade responsibilities" to the Empire: it was not the right thing to be "willing to take the hand of mother in our time of need (though such had not yet arisen), and afterwards see her in trouble and not go out to help her".

This was but a rationalisation ( later accepted as prime motivation) for what was really a widespread thirst for war, as a means of 'proving the nation's spirit'. Noel McLachlan has suggested that the nation was looking for the 'blood sacrifice of manhood' denied it by non-revolutionary, quasi-independence. He is probably right: but the 'blood sacrifice' propitiated the wrong god. The real and enduring cost to Australia of this transient state of grace was that it lost its budding sense of independent identity, and as a result lapsed willingly into a period of renewed and redoubled subservience to the wishes and interests of the British Empire; which as ever were considered in 'Empire Central' to be synonymous with and indistinguishable from those of the "motherland".

The motives of the tenth of the population that did serve overseas were impossibly mixed, and some might seem improbable today. Many seemed to think it a great adventure, perhaps a



welcome opportunity to escape the unremitting hardship of life on the land, or to escape the stultifying rigidity and boredom of their 'racially pure' society: "six bob a day tourists", they called themselves. Regardless of intent, their comparatively large numbers and their sterling performance (especially as eulogised by British propaganda eager to emphasise the 'glory' that went with serving the (British) colours) did bring Australia a fleeting prominence in the great affairs of the world.

Australian Prime Minister William Morris Hughes could stand on the same stage, sit at the same table, as the leaders of the great powers - and make his demands, just as did the others. He was "speaking for 60,000 dead" - more than the losses of the United States, and he made sure President Wilson - and Lloyd George and Clemenceau - knew it. What a price for a few minutes' limelight!

#### **Astray From its Duty or its Interest**

Australia was better prepared for the immediate demands of the Great War, so far as ensuring its own security interests were met, than it either had been or would be during its periods of direct dependence on the not so strong and willing apron-strings of mother England. Despite the self-imposed blinkers of "race-patriotism", Australian leaders had "made considerable progress in defining the issues" central to national security in their national setting; and they had begun to give practical effect to their perceptions in the discussion and implementation of nascent defence and foreign policies. Australian actions at the outset of

war showed how much had been done towards overcoming the problem of external security dependency. That was as good as it got - ever.

The problem was that, apart from dealing with any local difficulty that could be expected to arise, Australia felt obliged to join in at the centre as well as on the periphery of the conflict, by reason of its long-maintained (though decreasingly necessary) commitment to Imperial solidarity bred by continued cultural-economic dependency. And much of this was generated and reinforced by the self-imposed regional isolationism that was the logical outcome of the doctrine of racial purity and 'blood-alliance'. To reap the expected favour from the chieftains of the Imperial race, it was necessary to shed blood - as visibly as possible, which meant on the battlefield of greatest concern to Britain. Cook's emotional pledge to Asquith did not have to mean sending his 20,000 troops wherever Britain chose - but he had already ceded control over their deployment, just as earlier he had ceded to the British Admiralty the automatic right to command of the Australian fleet.

As with the writing of the Constitution, Australia kept yielding the substance of independence to mitigate unseemly wrangling which might sully the image of its Imperial benefactor. In 1901-2, Australia's Prime Minister Andrew Barton, confronted with Australia's first test of its ability to conduct its affairs as an independent nation, had run for cover in the Imperial skirts when confronted with a difficult, but not insuperable, difference with Japan. Both the Queensland colonial government

before him, and America's President T.R. Roosevelt, showed it was possible to reach a satisfactory compromise between Japanese pride and western bigotry\*. Roosevelt's naval emissary, Admiral Sperry, had warned of the unreliability of imagined ties of race and sentiment, between nations so far removed in geography and practical interest; and the truth of his words was proven only a few years later.

When Australia might have needed British help, it was not available. If it had swallowed Churchill's self-interested, patently ridiculous assertion (in 1913, still trying to subvert the agreement reached in 1911) that the safety of Great Britain was the necessary and sufficient guarantee of the security of Australia and New Zealand, then Australia would not have had the Navy for which both countries soon were to "thank God". New Zealand, Churchill had noted with paternal pride, was doing the right thing - paying for a battleship to be based in "home" waters. Australia, he made equally clear, was not 'on the team':

the same naval power of Great Britain in European waters also protects New Zealand and Australia from any present danger from Japan.

He was lying - there is no other word for it - and he knew it. Just as he and the British Admiralty knew it when they  
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\* In fact the Japanese themselves were no less bigoted than the white racists. They did not demand that all the rest be treated better, only themselves; and even then "voluntary" quotas and similar restraints on immigration were quite acceptable. Perhaps they knew even then that they would one day 'strut their stuff' in a way the west could neither ignore nor deprecate.

trotted out the same assurances for most of the next thirty years. When war came in 1914, Churchill's assurances were proven as hollow as they were transparent; Admiral Sperry's, as true as they were well-intentioned. And Australia's eternal threat proved to be it's only source of practical help. Not content, like Japan, to tend to its interests while still performing a beneficial service for the Triple Entente, neither did Australia seize the opportunity offered by the temporary brotherhood of war to improve its relations with the only major power of its region. The apocalyptic vision of submergence under a Yellow Tide obliged it to believe that the worst of all possible fates was for its imperial mother to be bested by Imperial Germany. The colonial-dependent mentality was so well ingrained that many seem to have assumed that Australia would simply be handed over as part of the spoils - but why not then declare independence and declare a real emergency such as both TR and even Woodrow Wilson might see as reason to make good on TR's pledge of 1914.

#### THE REASON WHY

Rather than garrison Britain's eastern possessions ( a respectable task, even compatible with race destiny, which would have released 20,000 of Britain's white colonial troops), why did Australia commit its men so far away? Until British diplomatic bungling and military ineptitude stiffened the spine of a crumbling Ottoman Empire, even the Suez canal was not under threat. And it would hardly have mattered had it gone. Australia



was shipping things out, not getting them in; both Cape routes remained viable and the Americans had just opened the Panama Canal. The whole thing was a nonsense. Even then, why send troops to France? The "glory" of Gallipoli proved that Australian troops could very well take care of Britain's business in the Middle East. Why did not the British themselves draw this reasonable conclusion (which would have economised substantially on the shipping that their Admiralty's inertia was costing them in the face of the U-Boats)?

Of course Australia's Imperialist politicians wanted their men to be seen "shoulder to shoulder" with Britain in the thick of the Western Front: though they seldom were; mostly they got sent out in front. And the British could treat their public to the heart-warming sight of the Dominions rallying to Britain in her hour of need. If Hughes could claim Australians had to die because Britain's generals were getting her own young men killed too fast, how much better for Britain to quell complaints about the toll of unceasing, pointless deaths than by pointing to all those 'magnificent young men', voluntarily travelling 12,000 miles just to sacrifice themselves on the altar of Imperial glory?

I think there was, too, a second part to the answer: Britain could not allow those in the non-white colonies to see that a European emergency must lead to the withdrawal of British forces. Australians were substituting for British in France, because they could not be allowed, except in small numbers within a still predominantly British garrison, to be seen to be required

to substitute for them abroad. It would have dented the illusion of British omnipotence - and it kept Australian attention fastened, as through a telescope, firmly on Europe and the Middle East.

It also played up the importance of the "imperial lifeline" through Suez, even though this was mostly a one way street. How much these things were calculated upon at the time is hard to tell, but the conditioned reflexes thus established certainly became major factors in British manipulation of Australian governments before, during and after the Second World War.

These manipulations, and Australian responses to them, had serious effects on the Australian view of its relationship with the United States, and in the way it was conducted in the same periods. Since both countries had ended the war on the same side (in the field, even side by side) things should have gotten off to a good start. They did not. Billy Hughes and the Empire made sure of that.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**PARIS TO PEARL HARBOUR: 1918 TO 1941**

**HAPLESS RESULT OF A "HAPPY ENCOUNTER"**

The entry into the Great War of the United States in April 1917 provided the first opportunity for large numbers of Australians drawn from all areas and walks of life in their country, to meet an equally large number of Americans of equally diverse social and regional origins. It should have been a mutually beneficial experience, but in the long run (and not such a long run, at that) whatever good came of the informal contact of groups and individuals, was completely undone by the mutually reinforcing follies of the two nations' political establishments. After the war, indifference gave way not to enlightenment, but to unrelenting friction and even outright hostility. This came about largely because of unreasoning American hostility to the British Empire; and Australia's equally unreasoning attachment to it. Thus the mutual regard and understanding which seemed to flower on the *Champs de Mars* were ploughed under on a political battleground near the *Champs Elysees*.

**"Honorary Diggers"**

When the Americans finally arrived in France, the Australians could recognise in them a much more closely kindred spirit. As McLachlan observes, the "happy encounter" with

Pershing's troops "must have rubbed in the joys of real independence".<sup>1</sup> It is not hard to imagine Australians, fed up with the "bloody Poms" welcoming the Americans and their well-developed disdain for the "Goddamned Limeys"- and envying them their independence of command and ability to dictate terms to the other powers in return for their participation. Whereas Australia was, according to the pro-Imperial 'establishment', simply acting out of filial obligation; and got treated accordingly.

General Pershing's Army Staff went to France in May 1917, but Wilson got "only a half a million Americans under arms in 1917" and by the end of the year only 40% of these were in France, and still under training. Most of these men, and those that followed, did not see combat until at least the following March, when they had to be thrown into action to contain and reverse Ludendorff's last-gasp offensive. Until that emergency arose, their commander had insisted that they were not sufficiently trained to enter the field in large numbers; and, backed by his President, Pershing refused to feed his troops piecemeal into larger French and British formations. By September 1918, "600,000 American troops launched a decisive campaign that broke through German lines."<sup>2</sup> Wilson was hailed as the saviour, and his troops as the heroes of Europe. The Australians hardly rated a mention - they had launched and sustained the brunt of a "British" offensive. Australian leaders had had to fight the

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1. McLachlan, Waiting for the Revolution, p200.

2. LaFeber, The American Age, p288.



British tooth and nail to get their lions out of the clutches of Britain's donkeys, and into an army corps of their own, under Australian (or acceptable English) generalship. And even with all the praise they earned, the wider attitude to Australia could be found buried within the eulogies: "The Digger is the best thing that Australia has yet produced".<sup>1</sup> Powerful and willing cannon-fodder for a declining and demanding friend.

Most Diggers apparently came to like the Doughboys (they were not English, which was a distinct advantage<sup>2</sup>). Some went so far as to call them "honorary Diggers"; a reflection of the fact that the Americans, like the Australians, seemed an almost entirely different breed of people from the dogged but uninspired Tommies (in physique, generally inferior as well<sup>3</sup>), who so

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1. Crowley, vol.1, p313.

2. Australian historian C.E.W. Bean, who by this time was really fed up with the Britons, remarked on the "happy encounter" of Australian with American troops in 1917. On Independence Day, 1918, four companies of American troops were attached to Australian forces to receive their 'baptism of fire' in an Australian attack. See: McLachlan, pp200-1, and p355(n).

3. Undoubtedly as a result mainly of abysmal living conditions and poor diet. See Correlli Barnett, The Audit of War (London: MacMillan, 1986), Chapter Ten, "The Legacy of the Industrial Revolution". Drawing on official reports from as early as 1844, he draws an appalling picture of the miserable, degrading living conditions of much of the British urban working class. "Even by the late 1930s ... the bulk of the industrial population were still living in the same grim 'camps' first run up to house their great-grandparents." Standards of sanitation and hygiene were mediaeval. Infant mortality in the industrial cities was twice to three times that of Holland; Glasgow's rate was higher than Tokyo's. Malnutrition and plain bad diet was also a clear problem: a survey in 1926-9 showed that children of the "industrial classes" at age 17 were nearly four inches shorter than "professional's" children. In 1883 the difference had been nearly six inches. It is no wonder the British got so passionate about "redistribution of wealth", or least of practical benefits

willingly 'knuckled under' to an officer caste which was regarded, with few notable exceptions, as providing the sort of leadership that would be followed only by the idly curious or the suicidal<sup>1</sup>. Many felt, like one Australian officer:

We are the stronger race with the stronger morale at present, and some day [the British] will have to treat us with consideration as our right and not out of courtesy....<sup>2</sup>

But if any special regard was developed for the place the American soldiers came from, and any widespread feeling that "it would be better in all future dealings to be", like the Americans, "independent of these British people", both sentiments soon were submerged in the post-war torrent of Imperial quasi-nationalism promoted by the political right and the mostly conservative press.

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...Continued...

supposedly derived from being the world's greatest Empire. Its sun had never even risen in much of industrial Britain.

1. Though Pershing and his officers, with some very notable exceptions, were nothing to crow about. British General Sir Ivor Maxse (one of the few who could justly be called first-rate), was appalled by the Americans' dreadful state of training and by the ineptitude of their officers; most brigadiers were "Impossible. Too old." And below them: "The officers with few exceptions knew nothing and would learn nothing." But he admired the rankers, who "were 'keen and brave' and their custom of ignoring their own officers and seeking practical advice from Australian veterans ... was tacitly approved." American staff planning, medical and logistical support were almost non-existent; there were even accounts of U.S. troops literally starving to death. See: Denis Winter, Haig's Command, London: Penguin, 1991, pp216-221.

2. McLachlan, p201. The comment culled from Bean's Official History. No further detail given.

### **Mistaken Identity: Australia at War's End**

Far from encouraging a more assertive sense of national identity and interest the war left Australians more confused than ever on both counts. Hughes, not content with having both split his party and exacerbated the divisions of religion and goccupation in Australian society (and the regional divisions as well), continued to undermine Australian identity in his attempt to justify what he had done. While Hughes remained in London, continuing his strident toadying to Imperial interests, his deputy in Australia told the people that they had offered their "unfaltering loyalty to [Britain's King] and to all that he stands for."<sup>1</sup> It was of course acceptable to have some pride in being an Australian, but the people should be proud

especially, to be Britishers; proud of our blood and race and of our partnership in the Empire whose existence means so much to our safety and welfare [no memory there of 1914!], an Empire where justice rules and charity prevails, and the weaker peoples are not subjugated ....<sup>2</sup>

No memory of Australian history, either; though Mr W.A. Watt, native-born Australian (one of the very few in Welshman Hughes' government), probably could have recited backwards the names and reigns of the Kings and Queens of England.

As the living began to return from France and Palestine, bearing with them the aura of the ANZAC legend and the glamorous

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1. Crowley, vol.1, p310.

2. Ibid.

'myth of the Digger', it was held close to treason to suggest - at least, out loud - that "our grand army of the dead" had, but for a few score in 1914, gone to its glory for no satisfactory reason.<sup>1</sup>

### **"Sympathy for the Favorite Nation"**

In London, William Morris Hughes and his racial brother<sup>2</sup> David Lloyd George were meeting with dignitaries from the other Dominions and India, setting out the Imperial position for the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Complaining bitterly that Australia, despite its great contribution to the Empire, had not been consulted over the terms of the Armistice, Hughes and the other premiers of the White Empire united to successfully demand a place for each at the Peace Conference, where decisions would be taken that would bear directly upon their individual nations' vital interest. Nonetheless, they had also agreed, in the glow of an unprecedented level of wartime cooperation (achieved only very late in the war, after prolonged complaint) as an "Imperial Commonwealth", to have Britain represent them all at the

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1. 'Treachery to the fallen' was the sort of jingo terminology pushed by the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), which was put together in 1916 with the avowed aim of securing adequate post-service benefits for Australians returned from active service abroad. But it was captured from the start by Imperial jingos, and lobbied ceaselessly on behalf of conscription. Its postwar activities in some states had more in common with those of Germany's *Freikorps* than with soldiers of "the first truly democratic army". In Queensland the RSSILA threatened to take matters into its own hands if the State government did not overcome its "lack of courage" and actively suppress the 'Bolsheviks'. See: Bolshevism in Brisbane, Crowley, vol.1, pp319-21.

2. Even, ethnic brother. They both were Welsh.



Armistice negotiations. They also, it appears, were close to unanimous in their poor opinion of both President Woodrow Wilson and most if not all of his 14 points. They would give Wilson his League of Nations, if it would keep him (and a goodly part of their own electorates) happy; and do their best to throw out or emasculate anything else which might clash with their pursuit of self-interest. This pretty well took care of Wilson's hastily conceived and ill-defined agenda for world peace on American terms.<sup>1</sup>

In September of 1919, Billy Hughes came home claiming triumphantly that thanks to his efforts "Australia is safe". He had secured the mandate for exclusive Australian administration of German New Guinea, even though "President Wilson's fourteen points forbade it"; and - "the greatest thing" - had saved the White Australia Policy in the face of not only Wilson but of a "world assemblage ... from all the corners of the earth." Thanks to these great achievements, Australians could sleep secure in the knowledge that they would remain "more British than the  
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1. The "blueprint" for the Fourteen Points Address to Congress, given on 8 January 1918, was put together in four frantic weeks by a small team known as The Inquiry, and headed by columnist Walter Lippmann. They produced eight of the "points" for Wilson; he added the other six himself. These (the first five and the fourteenth) "dealt with general principles" and were the ones that "captured the [American] public's enthusiasm. But the territorial provisions in the other eight points were the crucial ones to the warring governments." Colonel House, Wilson's "human intercessor", on arrival in Paris on 25 October 1918 decided he could "dally no longer over this Armistice". He summoned Lippmann and told him "You helped write these points. Now you must give me a precise definition of each one ... by tomorrow at ten o'clock." It is no wonder they lacked something in precision and practicability. See: Ronald Steel, Walter Lippmann and the American Century, New York: Little-Brown, 1980, pp127-53.

people of Great Britain". Australians, now the sole guardians of British racial purity, it seems, could now "achieve our great destiny, which is to hold this vast continent in trust for those of our race who come after us"<sup>1</sup>. Sixty thousand Australians had died to provide a south sea bolthole for those genetically-pure Britons seeking a new locus for civilisation. The new Imperial transmigration scheme was already underway - and relations with the United States and Japan damaged beyond any necessity; with the latter, probably beyond repair.

#### **The Empire Strikes Back - Hughes and Wilson at Versailles**

"The man is surely the quintessence of a prig" said Sir George Trevelyan<sup>2</sup> of Wilson in 1917. William Morris Hughes cheerfully would have seconded that remark. He was clearly unimpressed with Woodrow Wilson, thinking him something of a political babe in the woods, it appears. In his memoirs, Hughes damned Wilson with faint praise: "[Wilson] had brilliant intellectual gifts ... he was inspired by lofty ideals... but he lacked those qualities which go to make a great leader of men."<sup>3</sup> He portrayed Wilson as a stubbornly opinionated dreamer and a glory-hunter to boot, in words that fairly crackle with a kind of -----

1. Australia is Safe. Crowley, vol.1, pp323-5. Quotes Hughes' address to the House of Representatives on 10 September, 1919.

2. Quoted in Walter LaFeber, The American Age, pp277-8. This after Wilson's appearance on Capitol Hill on 22 January 1917, when he laid out his principles for an "organised common peace" to serve the interests of "every enlightened community."

3. W.M. Hughes, Politics and Potentates, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1950. In Harper, Australia and the United States, pp62-6.

mildly contemptuous pity. He described with relish his confrontation with Wilson over the New Guinea Mandate; which Hughes won. Wilson undoubtedly regretted his departure from the usual American position on the ambiguous status of the Imperial Dominions,<sup>+</sup> and found the rumbustious Hughes just plain offensive to a person of refined sensibilities such as himself.\*

Australia's clear identification with colonialism, its equally clear rejection of both the 'open door' and the principle of self-determination, and thus its unwavering support of the interests of the perfidious, decadent European powers, all painted it as merely a lackey of Great Britain. And not at all a country "one in freedom" with the United States.

Worse than that, Hughes caustically eloquent advocacy of (his version of) his demi-nation's interests had held Wilson up for public ridicule before the "four corners of the earth", and contributed to the systematic subversion of the fourteen points which Wilson and his supporters were likely neither to forgive nor forget. Americans on both sides of politics also were determined to break the British Empire, and here was Hughes seeking strenuously to defend both the empire and all it stood for. Wilson, who had put nearly 5 million Americans into uniform to make the "world safe for democracy", was told his effort

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+Which was that, since they professed allegiance to a common crown, they were to be spoken for by one voice: that of London.

\* And he was not alone in that. Hughes' parliamentary colleagues found him hard to take.

counted little, by the Premier of a country whose entire population came to about the same number. "I'm speaking for 60,000 dead", snarled Hughes at the new pretender to world leadership; clearly implying that America's mere 53,000 was an insufficient sacrifice, that it was opportunistically trying to steal from others the fruits of the victory that they - not the rapacious, late arriving, over-moralising, United States - had won.

"Our little man" obviously enjoyed himself kicking Wilson's shins, but forgot that he was kicking the office of President as well as the man. Wilson might well be getting undercut at home by a hostile congress and growing disgust at both "Lloyd George's lack of scruple and Wilson's lack of skill"<sup>1</sup> (and a feeling that the "British had cynically betrayed the ideals for which the .. war had ... been fought"<sup>2</sup>), but he was still the incumbent of an office revered by Americans perhaps more than "we British" revered the Monarchy. Hughes had lashed himself to the mast of Empire and Australia would have to bear with it the fury of the storm brewing in Washington. In 1917 Wilson had told *eminence grise* Colonel House that American financial leverage, provided by a growing trade surplus and spiraling war loans, would allow America to dictate terms to Britain and France: "they will be financially in our hands"<sup>3</sup>. Tied to London and Sterling, so was -----

1. David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, (New York: Avon Books, 1989), p389.

2. Ibid.

3. LaFeber, p297.



Australia. Americans would not support Wilson's world peace; but they were more than ready and able to conduct world economic warfare.

Hughes, a consummate political street-fighter (and himself not averse to a spotlight or two) who believed thoroughly in the 'art of the possible', forgot there were plenty more like him in Washington, with lots more international clout. And he did not do so well for Australia in Paris as he obviously believed. In his own admiration for his performance on the international stage, Hughes seems to have fallen into a prepared trap on the matter of the infamous 'racial equality' clause which Japan wanted written into the Covenant of the League of Nations. Hughes' strident defence of Australia's right to control immigration (and thus exclude anyone it didn't want to 'taint' its precious blood), was certainly offensive to Asian sensibilities and upsetting for white 'liberal' opinion; but he was in effect only saying what all the white nations thought. Aside from the 'White Empire', they just did not want to admit it. Even so, Hughes still failed to gain majority support for his stand, which ought to have failed and thereby forced upon Australia a less visceral approach to race and immigration.

His bacon was saved, in peculiar circumstances, by (of all people!) Wilson<sup>1</sup>, who still did not rise in Hughes' estimate; the

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1. Wilson was chairman of the drafting committee for the Covenant of the League of Nations, to which Japanese Baron Makino had proposed the insertion of a clause guaranteeing equal rights to all men regardless of race. This would demolish, according to

sceptical little Welshman probably thought it just confirmed Wilson's pusillanimous hypocrisy. In his battles with Wilson for Australian control of the former German New Guinea, Hughes again found himself acting as the stalking horse for other ambitious Dominions and of course for the interests of Europe's two sagging Empires, whose own claims were by no means modest nor altruistically motivated. Later contacts with the US, even though not involving the two antagonists of Paris, went little better.

### **Some Unfortunate Precedents**

Australia's Prime Minister had also inaugurated two unfortunate trends that would further plague Australian social-political development, and the Australian international image, for decades afterwards. The first was that of sending Prime Ministers abroad to represent the nation, which tended to seduce them away from the more mundane business of daily life in Australia to the superficial glamour of sitting at a table with (but largely disregarded by) the major powers. They consistently would overestimate their nation's importance, and underestimate -----  
...Continued...

Hughes, Australia's control over immigration (which he also wished extended to New Guinea). As in 1901-2, Makino was willing to compromise - he "sought no more than a technical right of free entrance"; that is recognition of equal status as human beings. Had Hughes had the slightest knowledge of Japan (such as its own deep feeling and practice of racial exclusivity) he might have compromised. But true to form, the abrasive little man would not give way. Wilson threw out the 11-6 vote on the ground that it was not unanimous: democracy in action! This, mainly because his own western states were as racist as Australia. See: T.B. Millar, Australia in Peace and War, p121; for an account of the goings on at Versailles; and Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope, pp269-77, for an account of the western states' attitudes to the Japanese in particular.

its weakness and incapacity to genuinely influence events in the world. They would never see the need (the absolute necessity) to just hold back and consolidate their own nation's position - economically, socially, militarily, diplomatically. It was always another Charge of the Light Brigade: superficially glorious, but ultimately inconsequential - at awful cost. "Not though the [public] knew , someone had blundered" - yet again, as usual, in support of their own self-image.

With few exceptions, what Australia needed was a well-supported and well-briefed Foreign Minister, and a network of professionally staffed Embassies and consulates. This did not seem to play well with political leaders who felt their very position granted them gifts of omniscience beyond the reach of mere men. It is my view that Australian Prime Ministers so enjoyed the (cunningly orchestrated) flattery and outwardly deferential treatment they received in London and other capitals, that they were willing to subvert the national interest in order to secure for themselves that standard of reverence which they had never received ( nor earned, it might be said) in their own

country. It is a maxim amongst sailors that things never look so well as in a foreign port - it seems to apply no less amongst politicians.\*

The second adverse trend was to allow Australia to be pushed out front as a stalking horse for measures the major powers, for their own good reasons, did not want to be the first to propose. Australia and other minor members of "the club" could be sent out like forward scouts, to draw fire and reveal the position of the adversary. Casualties could be heavy in that role: Australia took them.

**The 1921 Imperial Conference:  
"Illusion of a Common Interest"**

So convinced was Hughes of the value to Australia of a military-economic alliance with Britain that he was willing to concede to Britain the ultimate direction of Australia's foreign relations, in the interest of having a say (so he thought) in the direction of all Imperial policy. British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George put Britain's view plainly: the Dominions may have "been given equal rights in the control of the foreign policy of the Empire [in recognition of] the aid they gave us during the

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\* I have observed at first hand the deferential treatment accorded "Very Important Persons" in countries outside Australia, and I am assured by people in the appropriate departments at home that the same is given there. But there is nonetheless a difference. Australians still tend to equate service with servility, and 'kick-up' at the slightest provocation (opportunity?). An Australian visiting Europe, especially, but also the United States, in an official capacity at high level, is treated (literally) with deference and his whims accommodated in a manner which he never before has known - but to which he, like any other mortal, would gladly become accustomed.



Great War" but even so, that right could only be exercised 'up to a point'. It was all very well allowing the "white Empire" to talk about Imperial foreign and defence policy, but "The machinery must remain [in London] ... you must act through one instrument [which had to be] the British Foreign Office."<sup>1</sup> Despite the practical difficulties of maintaining effective continuous consultation to provide the desired inputs into British policy "machinery" (and which Hughes himself clearly identified), Hughes still was more than willing that Australia should yield (or at least, not claim) a greater degree of autonomy in all aspects of its external relations in order to further the best interests of the Empire. He had grown accustomed to painting on a larger canvas and with a bolder palette than was available at home, and in his eagerness to be an imperial statesman he seems to have been quite willing to sacrifice a large measure of real sovereignty of action. By no means was he the last Australian politician to labour under this delusion, for which as always the nation paid the price.

Hughes actively resisted attempts by Canada and South Africa to secure "a formal constitutional statement of the dominions' existence as completely sovereign states, legally free to stay neutral in a British war, or to secede from the Commonwealth".<sup>2</sup> He was in fact seeking to formalise what he viewed already as an  
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1. Correlli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1986, pp174-5. Citing a speech by Lloyd George given to the House of Commons in 1921.

2. Ibid., p176.

informal alliance between Britain and Australia. Like the British themselves, he did not see beneath the facade of victory to the deep and debilitating weakness at the heart of the Imperial structure: the chronic backwardness of British education and industry, and the equally chronic absence of will to either recognise or tackle these problems in any major degree.<sup>1</sup>

He failed to see the truth in his own admonition of support for finding a way to reconcile the (irreconcilable) dictates of geography with the ideal of unified Imperial policy: the 1921 Imperial Conference was indeed "the last magnificent flare of a dying illumination." Hughes and his successors hitched Australia's fortunes to a falling star. Seventy years later, they were still doing the same thing.

The military security issue most vital to Australia was the future of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty. Britain wanted to renew it, and Hughes quite rightly observed that Australia's security interests would be best served if this were done. The USA did not

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1. Correlli Barnett's The Audit of War offers a damning indictment of the whole British system from the mid-nineteenth century until 1945. There were plenty who saw the problem - and very few prepared to remedy it, except through social welfare measures which the country could not pay for. When I first read this book it made my flesh crawl: over the same period, and after 1945 thanks to assisted immigration and continuing British preference, Australia had imported just about the whole mess, lock, stock and barrel. It was like a child born with a congenital defect.

want the Treaty renewed, even in modified form.<sup>1</sup> Hughes thought it an impossible position - American intransigence on the matter would oblige Britain to give grave offence to a "proud and sensitive people" (who nonetheless were expected to remain calm and well-disposed in the face of Australia's insulting immigration policy) who had been faithful allies. The treaty had furthermore "helped to avoid competition in naval armaments in the Pacific and Far East".

The Netherlands and France, whose possessions in the Far East were "almost wholly defenceless", wanted the treaty renewed - and so did Japan. Hughes was angered that:

America would neither work with us nor allow us to work without her ... [but had offered no worthwhile substitute arrangement]. To rebuff a faithful ally without cause was to invite trouble [and]... would reasonably be interpreted by Japan as evidence of our intention to reverse our policy.<sup>2</sup>

Britain's ambassador in Tokyo echoed this warning. Britain was being made to choose between Tokyo and Washington - but Washington was offering nothing to offset the inevitable hostility that would be roused in Japan. And wishful thinkers in Britain, like Winston Spencer Churchill, had in their anxiety to

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1. See: Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, pp251-4. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes "bluntly informed the British Ambassador in Washington that 'he viewed the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in any form with disquietude' and made the ambassador's flesh creep with references [to the consequences]"; which presumably were all financial. The British economy was in tatters; the 'Geddes Axe', about to swing.

2. W.M. Hughes, The Splendid Adventure (London: Ernest Benn, 1929). In Harper, Australia and the United States, pp67-71.

avoid facing the reality of Britain's decline, succumbed to that same hopeful hogwash of brotherhood of the "English Speaking Peoples" that already had so fatally attracted Australia.

Churchill's views were shared by one Arthur Balfour<sup>1</sup> - who would head the Empire delegation to the Washington Naval Conference.

Churchill thought it would be 'fatal' to combine with Japan against America. That not only mis-represented the situation, in actuality (the object was, as both Hughes and Lloyd-George appreciated, to be able "to exercise greater power over the Eastern policy [of Japan] as an ally") but misread both the balance of power in the world and American attitudes. Lloyd George thought it would be wrong to "give up Japan". From the point of view of British Imperial interest, the old cynic was right.<sup>2</sup>

However, Britain had no answer to the now overwhelming economic pressure that America could bring to bear<sup>3</sup>, and Lloyd-

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1. Barnett, p263. Balfour in 1917 waxed lyrical about "the two great branches of the English-speaking race", that had sprung "from the same root" and now were to be united in perpetuity "for one common purpose in one common understanding." In Churchill's view the purpose was to keep the Anglo-Saxons on top, and the understanding was that Britain would provide directions, and America, the money and (when needed) the muscle.

2. Ibid, pp262-3.

3. Interestingly, America's major bankers did not support the hard line taken by the politicians regarding payment of war debts; just as they had also argued against imposing punitive reparations on Germany. J.P. Morgan's Tom Lamont had worked hard at Versailles to avoid an excessive burden being placed upon Germany (he agreed with his bank's analysis that it could lead only to depreciation of the mark, and subsequent inflation). Lamont also thought the Harding-Coolidge 'philosophy' ("they hired the money didn't they?") on war debt as a political-



George's resolve was further weakened by his wish to placate America to secure his rather confused territorial ambitions in the Middle East (and his unconfused objective to hold sway over the bulk of the known oil resources of the region), and by the pro-American arguments advanced by Canadian Prime Minister Meighen. Hughes argued strongest against Meighen ("the Voice of America"), but did not prevail in his wish for the Anglo-Japanese Treaty to be renewed before matters came to a head later in 1921 at the Washington Conference.

**"Cases Where no Real Common Interest Exists":  
The Washington Naval Conference**

The Washington naval conference nailed shut the coffin of British naval supremacy. Churchill thought it wonderful - it would save money. And he gathered unto himself an increasing raft of delusions to support his belief; these came back to haunt Australia, though the 'last Lion' would be unrepentant. He was well on his way to becoming, in American hands, the 'first

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economic lever was potentially disastrous: "[Harding is] the last man in the world to lead 120 million people [in the U.S.] from the darkness and confusion of [the Great War] out into the light." And he felt the same way about American 'leadership' for the rest of the (trans-Atlantic) world. Jack Morgan argued that the debt should be cancelled: "the Allies had sent soldiers against Germany while America was still sending only dollars; decency demanded that the war debt be regarded as a subsidy and not as a loan." See: Ron Chernow, The House of Morgan, pp199-218. Bush should be very grateful that apparently no-one in Germany or Japan had read this book by late 1990.

Pussycat'<sup>1</sup>. The broad technical results of the conference are well enough known; Charles Evans Hughes ambushed the delegates on the first day of the conference with sweeping proposals for scrapping of existing tonnage of major warships, construction limits and agreed ratios of tonnage between the major naval powers<sup>2</sup>. The two major side effects for Australia are perhaps less widely recognised.

Firstly, the United States reverted to its policy of having Britain speak as the sole voice for the Empire; the Dominions were not to be separately represented, though they might be permitted some slots in the British delegation. Curzon, the British Foreign Minister, was quite happy with this arrangement, and in fact would have been more than willing to dispense with the troublesome colonials altogether, though his Prime Minister was not willing to go that far. But the upshot was the same - the Dominions were put back into short pants, and Australia and New Zealand especially had aided and abetted the process by their willingness to forego independent diplomatic representation

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1. As David Irving notes, Churchill "remained unerringly convinced that he was protecting his country and its empire from its greatest enemy. Yet in reality he had allied himself with the Empire's profoundest enemies ..."; East Coast anglophiles notwithstanding, I think this judgment is correct in the broad sense. Americans may have had some sympathy for Britain's predicament, but there was little empathy. There may be more now, with America itself in decline and a goodly portion of the world gloating over the fact.

2. LaFeber, pp321-3.

abroad. The eloquent and persuasive Hughes was the chief culprit, having exhorted the Dominion Prime Ministers (and in effect his own public) in 1921:

"What new right, what extension of power can [fully autonomous policy-making and individual diplomatic representation] give us? ... What could the Dominions do as independent nations that they cannot do now? ... What can they not do, even to encompass their own destruction by sundering the bonds that bind them to the Empire?"<sup>1</sup>

By this very endorsement of the virtues of Imperial bondage, Hughes was helping to condemn Australia to a retreat to the Colonial status that its pre-war politicians had shown some promise of growing out of. This had serious effects for Australia's later attempts to win US support in the Pacific as the threat of war with Japan loomed ever larger less than two decades later: in Washington as well as in London, "Australia was treated like a colony because it acted like one."<sup>2</sup>

The second, more visible effect of this development was that Australian major warship tonnage was included in the British quota; and Australia got part of the British scrapping quota, too - in the shape of the Flagship, the Battle-cruiser HMAS *Australia*. In April 1924 she was scuttled off Sydney Heads,

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1. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, pp262-3.

2. David Day, the Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939-42, New York: Norton, 1989, p31. Day's book makes it abundantly clear that the 'betrayal' of Australia's security interests was brought about as much by its own politicians' ineptitude and eagerness to fall in with British desires, as much as by dissimulation and outright duplicity on Britain's part.

through which she and the rest of the infant RAN had steamed so proudly less than 11 years before. This generated a good deal of resentment against both London and Washington. "Strong men were wet eyed: many cursed. It was a tragic blunder."<sup>1</sup> But such sentiment was short-lived among the general public. Strangely enough, Australia's political leaders seemed to draw little if any of the opprobrium due to them for having allowed such grave insults to Australia's purported sovereign identity to be inflicted by their 'brethren' situated so many thousands of miles away; apathy was setting in again.

Another unfortunate effect, less visible, was that, so far as the Australian Delegate to the conference, Senator George Pearce, was concerned, his travel to America had served more to confirm old prejudice than to broaden his outlook on relations with the new giant. Pearce was unimpressed with both President Harding and his understudy (and eventual successor) Calvin Coolidge - but so were many Americans, which he seems to have overlooked<sup>2</sup>. No-one demurred against Pearce's judgment, even

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1. Odgers, R.A.N.- An Illustrated History, p72. Citing the comment of RADM H.J. Feakes, Commanding the Australian Squadron. Ironically, Australia went to her premature grave to the accompaniment of a 21-gun salute, fired by a visiting squadron of the Royal Navy.

2. See: LaFeber, pp316-7 and pp324-5. LaFeber notes that Coolidge "liked to sleep eleven hours a day". He quotes the memorable one-liner of "writer Dorothy Parker [who] was told in 1933 that Coolidge had died". Her reply: "How can they tell?"



though he had proven himself an "intellectual Bourbon"<sup>1</sup> after a pre-war visit to Japan.<sup>2</sup> It has been stated that

this led Pearce to resist greater Australian intimacy with the United States, and to the deferral of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.<sup>3</sup>

Another "tragic blunder"; though no-one wept. Pearce, already a senior politician, held ministerial portfolios before and during the Great War, and for most of the inter-war period; his views would have carried great weight, and he was a key figure during the trade wars of the 1930s. The outlook was not promising. But in 1922, Pearce could tell the Parliament that it was, and get away with it. The same man who in 1911 had (quite sensibly) told his colleagues that he had once thought Australia an "appanage of England [but] now saw that Australia's future would be more largely affected by the nations to the north than by any group of European powers"<sup>4</sup>, now proclaimed a triumph of fatuous altruism over arduous realism:

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1. "Remembered everything, learned nothing". I first heard this term used by former Treasurer Paul Keating; like many of his venomous turns of phrase it is memorable, if ultimately unilluminating to those not "in the know". He should do something about that.

2. Pearce, as Minister for Defence, visited Japan in 1911. He apparently came back full of fear - but without the slightest notion why, apart from the fact that they were different, and had a lot of industry that could be put to warlike use. See: Meaney, p225.

3. Millar, p110.

4. Ibid. Neither Pearce nor his colleagues seemed to find it at all incongruous that he had just come back from representing his country as an 'appanage' to the British delegation.

"Japan [has] realised that the fate of ...moral isolation from the rest of the world [must be avoided] ... at all costs ... I believe that Japan is peaceful".

Whether or not it would remain so was in any case beside the point. Tranquility in the Pacific was assured by the compromise of British naval power to accommodate American envy and commercial ambition : "what better guarantee can there be for the peace of the world, than a friendly[!] understanding, full and complete, between the two great English-speaking Empires of the world?" Pearce was referring to two mortal commercial enemies, and to a third great power (Japan) that already considered itself morally isolated thanks in no small part to the misguided efforts at Versailles of his own Prime Minister.

The rapid succession of postwar conferences between 1919 and 1922 should have improved Trans-Pacific relations by facilitating regular high-level contact between Australia and America. But it seems that the more they saw of each other, the lower became their mutual regard. Encounters between Australia's and America's senior politicians and the impressions carried away from them were, by and large, less than cordial.

## **SHARING THE BURDEN OF EMPIRE**

### **Trade: A Losing Battle With America**

After the divisions caused by the war and the Red Scare of 1919, Australia settled down and in fairly optimistic mien began to tackle the task of national development. "Men, Money and Markets" had to be acquired to develop Australia's "vast

potentialities". Although the lack of confidence in external relations seems to have been almost total, there was also, according most Australian chroniclers of the 1920s, a general mood of optimism in the nation's ability to develop rapidly as an economic power with a living standard that was still amongst the highest in the world. The American example of the nineteenth century was cited as the main reason for development of protected industries intended mainly to serve the domestic market - the economic illogic of this (the market still little more than 5 million souls; about 4% of the U.S. population) was not apparent to most. The bulk of the protected industries were either local offshoots of British firms, or local monopolies such as BHP (steel and mining) and CSR (sugar refining).

Australia still was riding mainly on the sheep's back, and on the production of wheat and unprocessed minerals, even as it does today. The same troubles arose, too. In 1922 the Fordney-McCumber Act became the first in a series of hostile tariff and other trade barriers introduced in the United States to protect uncompetitive domestic industries, including mining and agriculture where Australia already was producing more efficiently despite its high-wage, high-cost economy. European and Japanese manufacturers also suffered, which meant Australia suffered twice. Britain was in a severe industrial slump, and lacked dollars and gold to pay its war debts. Australia, tied into the sterling bloc, also lacked dollars it needed to pay for a rising tide of American imports. Large loans were raised in London to help fund mainly state-sponsored national development

schemes, and to fund the assisted passage and placement on the land of British migrants to Australia. Australia also followed England back onto the gold standard in 1925.

Australia's mountain of public and private debt began to grow, but still could be serviced by rising volumes of exports, although uncompetetive secondary industries were already failing or suffering temporary closures for lack of demand. Increased tariffs on foreign goods did not appreciably help, and the impact of first the 1929 Wall Street crash and then the 1930 Smoot-Hawley tariff was devastating. Britain's greatest concern for Australia's plight was that it's heavily borrowed state governments should not stop servicing their English debt. The Bank of England sent out Sir Otto Niemeyer to tell the federal government to tell the states to stop all borrowing and adjust their budgets to ensure England got its money. The ire of the burgeoning army of unemployed was directed at "England's money lords", but the government was easily persuaded that it was all America's fault, and the only solution was for the Empire to stick together.

**Imperial Preferences:  
"Enmities of Another"**

Australian-American relations during the inter-war years were just let drift. Australians certainly got to see a lot of American films and read a good deal of the now-prodigious outpourings of American authors. Little such traffic went the other way, and the same was true with merchandise trade - Australia took 24% of its imports from the US by 1928-9, and sent



only 6% of its exports to the US market. This imbalance persisted throughout the prewar period, and despite the aggravation caused by foolish practices on both sides, the root cause was that Australia needed US manufactures far more than the US needed Australian raw materials and primary products; the two were, then as now, international competitors for primary exports. Improvements in the position, even had the US reduced its tariffs and quotas on competitive Australian products such as wool, would most likely have been only at the margins. Australia had added to its problems by subscribing , again seemingly out of ill-conceived loyalty to mother, to an informal system of reciprocal trade preferences with Britain, in which Australia gained little and lost much. The same was true of the Imperial transmigration scheme: it cost between 1,000 and 2,000 Pounds to settle just one immigrant, at a time when commodity prices were already falling. But in 1925, the Prime Minister (Stanley Melbourne Bruce) "said that the position not only of Australia but of the whole Empire depended upon a redistribution of its white population."<sup>1</sup> Apart from the sheer expense of getting immigrants in this way, the states bore an enormous burden of expenditure for public works, railways and other infrastructure.

The Great Depression made things very much worse, especially through the formalisation at Ottawa in 1932 of the Imperial Preference system. Despite the Prime Minister's claim that "Britain is helping us", little discernible benefit accrued  
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1. Crowley, vol.1, p400.

to Australia. The agreement could be seen more as 'revenge' for America's adversarial trade protection measures (such as the 1930 Smoot-Hawley tariff) and a variety of dog-in-the manger administrative restrictions that caused Australia considerable inconvenience - which no doubt was the intent.<sup>1</sup> Mounting aggravation and unceasing British lobbying led to the ill-fated Trade Diversion policy of 1936. It was an unmitigated calamity, diplomatically and economically, - all the more so for being bluntly announced and crassly implemented. It harmed Australia's profitable trade with Japan and gained it little or nothing in concessions from its maternal "ally" - despite the intent of holding open the Australian market to British goods<sup>2</sup>, which largely involved denying it as much as possible to those of higher quality and which were available (much more readily) from -----

1. The irritants included restrictions on entry to America of Australian businessmen, though no reciprocal restrictions were in force in Australia. A good summary of the trade question, as affecting Australia, Britain and the United States is given in T.B.Millar, Australia in Peace and War, pp110-15. While Australia took a thrashing in the U.S., the Americans gradually were able to largely circumvent Australia's restrictions by increasing sales via Canada.

2. Announcing the policy on 26 May, 1936, Sir Henry Gullett said in Parliament: "there is room for a substantial increase of Australian [primary] exports ... to Britain provided we are able to give to Britain an increased share of the Australian market." All 'Empire' goods would be admitted free of licensing (quota) restrictions, except for vehicle chassis; this privilege went only to Britain. Further, "owing to the extraordinary growth of [textile] imports from foreign sources [Japan] at prices which defy all competition" some action had to be taken "to preserve a reasonable proportion of the trade for the United Kingdom". The proposed solution was to impose a mutually agreed quota on Japanese textile products. But Japan would not agree, and so a tariff wall was put up instead. At this time Australia was enjoying a two-to-one advantage in its trade with Japan. See: Crowley, vol.1, p561.

the US. And of course it caused needless aggravation with the United States at time when war was once again looming dark on the horizon.

By 1935 many influential Australians, including members of all political parties and many of the government's military advisers, were openly sceptical of both the commitment and the capability of Great Britain to provide in timely fashion the "main fleet to Singapore" and thus fulfill the reassurance it routinely had given Australian governments over the inter-war period of Imperial assistance to deflect a Japanese southward thrust, should the need arise. Yet even as the Lyons government grew increasingly querulous - and even started spending some money of its own to remedy the abysmal state of Australia's defences - Sir George Pearce\*, now the Minister for External Affairs, would complain to the US Consul-General in Sydney that "in matters of politics there was a feeling that America was indifferent to Australia's welfare and could not be counted upon to come to her aid in case of need" and also that "in matters of trade there was a real hostility [in Australia] to the United States."

Fortunately, the Consul-General possessed a sufficiently generous spirit to credit Pearce with "the gift of saying some pretty bitter things without giving offence"! Pearce recited a list of grievances that clearly had been allowed to ferment for -----

\* He of the Washington Conference; not the most felicitous choice for the portfolio.

some time, without any noticeable improvement to the quality of the draught he administered: the US had delayed entry into the Great War; it had not joined the League of Nations; it had forced upon Britain a reduction in naval strength [specifically, in cruisers] to parity with the US, although the responsibilities of the two nations were in no way comparable. America was indifferent to "her Pacific obligations, as evidenced by her withdrawal from the Philippines"; Australia could not count on American help in the event of a Japanese attack. Then Pearce turned to trade, citing American tariffs imposed on Australian primary products for which there was no domestic American competition. This could not be "forgotten or forgiven".

The Consul General (Jay Pierrepont Moffat)<sup>1</sup> protested, citing an adverse climate of public opinion in America, but neither Pearce nor his colleagues were very much interested in the niceties of American domestic politics when it came down to hard cash and the plight of the politically powerful rural lobby; nor the plight of the equally powerful buy-British lobby, which infested every corner of the business and political establishments. Subsequent discussions went no better; the Australian side even saw little merit in Moffat's eminently sensible suggestion that Australia should have its own

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1. Sizeable extracts from Moffat's diaries, which record his meetings with Pearce and other Ministers and officials, and his "haul-down report" on Australia and its people, are found in Harper, Australia and the United States, pp95-118. See also in Harper, pp118-29, retrospective analyses of the Trade Diversion Policy.



representative Commissioner in Washington - an extraordinary attitude, but one which seems to reflect the extraordinary staleness of thought in Australia at the time. Much complaint, little self help, and virtually looking for an excuse to start a fight with the Americans to curry favour and a few table scraps from Britain. The Empire was moribund, but these men just would not believe it; even though they were prepared to berate the US for not being prepared to demonstrate its support for a commitment it had never made; that is, to guarantee the security of Australia from armed attack.

#### **Imperial Defence: Growing Doubts**

And this at a time when even Billy Hughes\*, the chief architect of Australia's post-war dependency on Imperial solidarity and British military might had to acknowledge that these could no longer be relied upon, and Australia would have to look to its own devices for its security. The League of Nations, weakened by abstentions and withdrawals, and by the military-industrial impotence of its nominally greatest power, was a broken reed, as were the many other 'covenants without swords' entered into by Great Britain up to 1935. Britain could barely

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\* Still in Parliament after over 30 years in the House. One of the main problems of Australian government between the wars was that it relied largely on the same coterie of individuals that had been around even prior to the Great War. The loss of 60,000 of its best young men seems to have gutted the country of political talent and vigour; an affliction not confined to politics, either. Most of the incumbents seemed to have sat there too long for what good they had done, to paraphrase Cromwell. the same ailment afflicted the body politic after 1945, contributing to both the stagnation of the Menzies years, and the chaos of the Whitlam period.

defend itself from the threat of a resurgent Germany, and militant Japan was no longer Britain's ally.

Hughes' illogical search for an Imperial alliance had also led to a wholly illogical defence policy based upon the idea of cooperative Imperial Defence. Under this concept, Australia, in return for the assurance that in time of trouble in the Pacific, Britain would send a "main fleet" to Singapore, had pledged itself to send men to wherever Imperial interests might be threatened. These interests could in fact only be construed as "British interests"; the Canadians and South Africans wanted none of it. Even the British Chiefs of Staff doubted the wisdom of the Imperial Defence concept: and had wondered in 1930 where the sense lay in Australia promising to send troops off in one direction so that Britain could send ships and troops to far-away Singapore. It was a good question that almost no-one in Australia, especially not its British-appointed Chiefs of Naval Staff, nor its parsimonious politicians, cared to ask for quite a while after 1930, let alone before.

Britain's own service chiefs picked huge holes in the whole notion of Imperial burden sharing. Having pointed out its fundamental illogic as a concept, they turned to its impracticality as policy; especially as an "informal" policy that depended for its effectiveness, if any, upon all parties to it having the same idea of what objectives were to be achieved:

...we have been forcibly struck by the fact that whilst it is clearly laid down that each part of the Empire is responsible for its own local defence, no express mention is made of collective responsibility for Empire

defence, and the inference, undoubtedly drawn by many of the Dominions, is that the United Kingdom would automatically shoulder the bulk of responsibility for the defence of the Empire in a major war.<sup>1</sup>

As the Chiefs rightly pointed out, the Dominion forces were not factors to be relied upon, but had to be treated only as "possible bonuses". This was, and remained, the truth of the matter for Britain; what Australia especially did not see (or openly admit) was that the converse, too, held good. British forces had to be treated as a possible (not probable) bonus in the event of war. But Britain's service bosses were not allowed to air these views outside of their ministries; and they passed only tainted, 'politically correct' appreciations to their satraps in Australia.

By 1935 it was very apparent that the "Singapore strategy" could not anyway be counted on - the Sembawang base was far from complete in facilities or defences, and the febrile (compared with times past) Royal Navy would probably be unable to provide the naval forces necessary to make the base any more than an isolated bunker. Something had to be done, said Billy Hughes, by Australia, for Australia, from "within our own resources and ... within a comparatively shorter period of time."<sup>2</sup> The leader of

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1. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, p209.

2. See especially Paul Hasluck, The Government and the People, 1939-41, Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952, pp41-47. Also Correlli Barnett, The Collapse Of British Power, pp214-219. Hughes considered that in Australia's circumstances, "the aeroplane came as a 'gift from the gods'"; but he was far from endorsing the Labor Party view that a bunch of aircraft was almost entirely the solution for Australian defence needs. He wanted the army and the navy strengthened as well. The debate

the Labor Party, John Curtin, agreed: "the dependence of Australia upon the competence, let alone the readiness, of the British statesmen to send forces to our aid [in the event of confrontation with an Asian power] is too dangerous a [foundation for] Australian defence policy."<sup>1</sup> Australia, he said, needed an effective Air Force and an aircraft industry to support it. Yet little of practical value was done, aside from an increasing tendency to assume that America would take the burden which Britain now could no longer carry. This was an interesting assumption, given the legacy of mutually low regard arising from the (now-abandoned) Trade Diversion policy.

The trade diversion policy had gone ahead despite some well reasoned argument from Moffat to the effect that the Australian Government was about to cure its economic problems by killing its patient. It very nearly did so, and earned a good deal of hostility from both Japan and the US in the process. The public, according to Moffat, entertained a more friendly disposition toward the US than especially the Anglophile conservatives who dominated the Government at the time; but it was a fuzzy and ill-

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...Continued...

degenerated all too often though, as Hasluck observes, "into a Navy-Army controversy", with the Air Force flitting around the edges. It did not make for good policy making, and a lot of money was wasted on inappropriate measures; much of the army vote, for instance, went into coastal fortifications. And a lot of the money voted for both Navy and Air Force could not be spent due to planning confusion, administrative inefficiency and British and local industry bottlenecks. On budget and expenditure, see: Hasluck, pp102-5.

1. Hasluck, p83.



defined regard of the potential supplicant for the potential saviour, a hangover of "race solidarity" and a feeling that there had to be some viable alternative to simply basking in the dimming rays of an empire whose sun was now well past the white dwarf stage.

As Moffat remarked at the end of a well-considered critique of the ills of Australian society (though still reflecting something of an American's incomprehension of a people who will not embrace wholeheartedly the virtues of the American model):

"the great trouble is that the Australian has really little understanding of American psychology, and there is all too little intercourse between the two, either official or through an exchange of travellers, to bring about a better understanding of the other's character and mentality."

He undoubtedly was correct in his assessment of Australians' ignorance - his own compatriots would better reveal their own in a few years' time.

### **Australia's Imperial Identity**

Many Australians were more likely to recall that America had stood on the sidelines for most of the Great War, and profited handsomely from it: "America has come out of the war the richest nation in the world. Australia, with her population of 5,000,000 has come out of the war with a debt of 350 [million pounds]."<sup>1</sup> This was equivalent to well over a billion dollars. After the war, Australia found that America showed scant respect  
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1. The Catholic Press, Sydney, 28 August 1919. In Crowley, Modern Australia in Documents, vol.1, p325.

for its contribution, which Australians felt had earned a seat at the high table of nations. But to Americans, they, like all the Dominions, were just subjects of the British King and not an independent nation at all. Britain should speak for them; if this did not suit, why then, become a republic like the USA. Britain was of course rather more accommodating on this point, and the American suspicion that Dominion representation was mainly a ploy by Britain to ensure its Empire bloc could vote down America in international conferences and the nascent League of Nations, probably was justified. Belittled by America and indulged by Britain, in the wake of the postwar conferences Australians seemed to feel a deepening sense of obligation to the Empire, to help prop up what many knew in their hearts was a house riddled with the termites of industrial decline, financial exhaustion, social-political upheaval at its centre and nationalist dissension abroad.

The makeup of the population was undoubtedly a major factor, and its "Britishness" was accentuated by what amounted to an Imperial transmigration scheme set up towards the end of the war to "redistribut[e] the white population of the Empire."<sup>1</sup> Another factor was that Australia was one of the few places where .pa

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1. T.B. Millar, Australia in Peace and War, p380. it appears that the aim was to keep the "white Empire" safe for Britain's sons, especially for its jobless ex-servicemen. It cost Australia a lot of money to indulge mother (and its own racist policies) so. Tens of millions were wasted putting 'soldier settler' immigrants onto farmland which they had not the skills nor the experience to nurture.

there had not been a major sell-off of British assets to help pay for war materiel - Britain still dominated Australian commerce, and thus to a large extent the policies of the nation.

Wartime propaganda, and its self-justifying extension into the postwar period, had also played a key role - Australians, still suffering that sense of latent inferiority that the British so love to cultivate in others (even in their own home-grown criminals), had now made the appropriate sacrifices to the motherland to be accepted as "true sons of empire". Having finally gotten accepted into the family of the civilised, why walk out again and so soon? And how to justify the sacrifice? British race destiny and "Imperial Nationalism" offered the only solace. McLachlan cited the death of his uncle Claude at Ypres in 1917. His (McLachlan's) mother cherished Claude's memory and though "proudly Australian" was (or became) "British to the core". She "idolis[ed] everything British." McLachlan's view is that "to justify Claude's death so far away, she felt compelled to persuade herself that England was well worth his dying for. The alternative - that it had been a futile sacrifice - unthinkable." But the unthinking worship of Britain bred a mental stupefaction that only made it harder for Australians to deal with the world as it was - especially since nearly all their information of it (and the image of Australia to the world) was beamed through the warped lens of British cultural dominance.

The churches inveighed against American films which stirred in the pure British youth "ill-regulated passion"; "the

exhibition of the degenerate life of 'fast America' cannot be good for any class of community".<sup>1</sup> Artists and scientists alike fled Australia as if the black death had descended upon it - petty-mindedness and wowserism dominated (Norman Lindsay despairing, on departure in 1931, that in Australia "there could be no hope for culture"<sup>2</sup> as things stood) along with union bloody-mindedness and managerial stagnation. By 1935, it was being questioned whether the "advantages" of remaining in the Empire "namely a market for our goods and naval protection, outweigh the disadvantages of our being culturally 'colonial' and intellectually minor forever"<sup>3</sup>. The "advantages" were already illusory, the disadvantages crippling. Even by the eve on war,

"85 percent of [our printed] news comes through London ... [and] we get very meagre news of Pacific countries. [Our news] is selected in the first place ... on account of its interest for a British public. ... It is not only a British view, but ... an official British view that dominates the Australian newspapers' account of world affairs. [And so] Australians ... follow uncritically the official British lead in foreign policy ...[and] a general acceptance of British views."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Australian Christian World, 27 June 1924. In Crowley, vol.1, pp387-8.

2. Politics and Culture, in Crowley, vol.1, p557.

3. Ibid., pp558-9.

4. Crowley, Vol.1., pp599-600. The next time Mr Baker complains about Australian restrictions on American pulp TV shows (including 'pseudo-news') being sold to Australia, he might bear in mind this "censorship by saturation".



### **One Last Try For Imperial Defence**

The ultimate absurdity in the farce of Imperial unity was played out at the 1937 Imperial Conference - the first held since 1930. The Australians came demanding assurances from Britain that it was committed to Australia's defence; and at the same time wanted to be told what they were expected to provide for the defence of Britain. The outcome would be laughable were it not so serious, and so similar to the sorts of silly noises that emanate annually from ANZUS communiques. No plans were made, no force structure targets set, no strategic objectives defined. The Commonwealth nations agreed that each was "bound to adopt such measures of defence as are deemed essential for their security, and for the fulfillment of their respective obligations." They undertook to "consult and cooperate with one another in the cause of peace and in all other matters of common interest."

Both sides knew there was a better than fair chance that Britain would be involved in another European war; and if it was, could not help Australia. Neither side would admit it. The British contented themselves with some calculations that they hoped never to be called upon to give substance to; the Australians contented themselves with the illusion that Britain's sense of obligation would overcome all obstacles in the event. Australian rearmament proceeded at a dilatory pace, guided by very little logic indeed, save the overriding 'necessity' for Australian forces to be trained and equipped to 'British standards'. Since no one had said outright "Australia will be on its own", nothing useful was done to deal with this eventuality.

The wish of indivisible union overcame the stark logic of physical separation and necessarily local preoccupation.

## A DARKENING HORIZON

In the meantime, Australian politicians continued to blunder blindly onward in the belief that if only they pleaded long and loud enough, eventually the United States would promise to defend them from the Japanese. Treasurer R.G. Casey wrote in 1938 that developing a stronger bilateral relationship with the United States was now "for us, a matter of desperate endeavour"<sup>1</sup> - but again, nothing substantive was done, and Australia's sole representative in Washington was the Australian Counsellor at the British Embassy. The United States steadfastly refused to give any such undertaking, for its own good reasons, and must have been somewhat perplexed in any case about the absolute lack of effort being made by Australia to look out for itself. Australia's rearmament effort, such as it was, as a whole was almost entirely directed to support of British requirements in the Middle East and in Britain itself. Australia's conduct of its affairs with the United States was more that of a voice in the British choir than a strong solo performance, and Australia's representative thought this a good thing.

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1. In a letter to Frank Officer, the lone Australian in the British Embassy in Washington. Cited in Glen St.J.Barclay, Friends in High Places: Australian-American Diplomatic Relations Since 1945, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), p4.

Incredibly, F.K. Officer replied to Casey's inquiry on the advisability of opening an Australian legation in Washington that he (Officer) thought:

*"the present arrangement ... amply sufficient for keeping [Australia informed] on the position here and for providing the British ambassador with an Australian advisor when it becomes necessary for him to take some special action on behalf of Australia[!]"\*.*

The utility of his post, Officer averred, was dependent mainly on how well the token Australian got on with the British ambassador; one need not be clairvoyant to discern what sort of stance would best satisfy the Empire's representative in Washington. And there is no doubt Officer had the right attitude, from the British point of view - which hopelessly misread American attitudes. Officer thought the fact that he was there at all would demonstrate to American officialdom "that Australia takes sufficient interest in their relations with the States ", though even he had to admit that his situation in Britain's embassy did little for Australia's claim to be an independent nation acting on its own behalf.

He knew that "the United States Government are very anxious to have us represented here in the same way as Canada and South

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\* Given the frequency with which these protestations of loyalty to the Crown and 'existing arrangements' crop up in diplomatic traffic of the period, I wonder to what extent they had become the "form". Was there a sense that the old order was not right for Australia, but that to adhere to it was politically correct, and to buck was injurious to career prospects? No less than one is routinely assailed today if daring openly to question the worth of the current establishment icons, ANZUS and the "western alliance".

Africa, and to be represented themselves on a diplomatic basis in Australia", but admitted he was "always a supporter of the present system", and proceeded to expatiate upon the financial expense that would be involved. The sum was in fact trifling by almost any standard - he made it sound as if a second gold rush would be needed to sustain the expense. To Officer (and much of the Australian political-bureaucratic establishment, it should be added), the chief justification for such fiscal profligacy (about \$60,000 per annum, if the embassy buildings were leased, not purchased) was that "in these times of stress an Australian Legation cooperating closely with the British Embassy would be some use to British prestige and influence in this country."<sup>1</sup>

Incredible!

#### **"A Hell of a Way Off"**

It should hardly have been surprising then for Australia's High Commissioner to London, S.M. Bruce,\* to learn in conversation with President Roosevelt that Australia's security in the event of a southward push by Japan would not be of any great moment to the American public and their representatives: "public opinion was not yet educated to the point of approving any commitments in this direction." Roosevelt referred to cabinet discussion held some time before, in which he had canvassed

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1. Letter to Casey, 25 January 1939. Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49; vol.II., Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS), 1976. Document No.11.

\* Also an ardent Anglophile, who would have done better to give his sometimes refreshingly penetrative scepticism toward British policy a freer reign.



opinions regarding hypothetical attacks on Canada and Australia. In the event of the former, the United States would:

"have to intervene ... [but as to] an attack on Australia, ... after some hesitation the Attorney General [had] replied, voicing ... the general view of the Cabinet, 'Well, Australia is a hell of a way off'."1

Though other members of the Administration made slightly more reassuring murmurs<sup>2</sup> and did not voice open disagreement with Bruce's hopefully expressed view that the US public would "insist on the US taking a hand" against a Japanese southward push, neither did they make any guarantees of indirect or direct assistance. Since Bruce spoke essentially from the British point of view, which saw the US as holding the Imperial fort in East Asia until the temporary inconvenience in Europe had been dealt with (he also made a plea for writing off Britain's remaining war debt from the Great War), he probably succeeded only in reinforcing the impression in the US that anything to do with matters in the Pacific that might be of concern to Australia should be discussed with Whitehall - which would convey the decisions and instructions to Australia as appropriate.

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1. Ibid., Document 82, attachment II. (Letter Bruce to Menzies, 8 May 1939.)

2. Ibid. Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles thought the public less opposed to US intervention in the Pacific than in Europe.

**Australia's "Melancholy Duty":  
War in Europe**

The struggle for an American commitment to Australia's defence continued unabated, but Australia continued to do stupid things despite its increasing concern about its military and industrial nakedness. The height of silliness (and the depth of subordination to narrow British interest) was reached when, despite Roosevelt's adjuration on the need to improve communication and especially personal contact between the two countries, Australia continued to frustrate American attempts to institute a direct air service across the Pacific, in an attempt to support British efforts to institute an "Empire Air Route" across the Pacific.

This required British access to landing rights in Hawaii, which the U.S. continued to deny so long as it was prevented by the Australian government from flying across the Pacific direct to Australia.\* Although it was clearly in Australia's interest to tell the British to sort out their problem on their own, while encouraging Pan-American to fly straight into Sydney from Honolulu, the Australian and New Zealand governments instead chose to help Britain bargain from its position of weakness by offering the ridiculous alternative to the Americans of cutting off all access to New Zealand as well: and further isolating both

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\* The Pan-American Airways trans-Pacific 'clipper' service was obliged to terminate in New Zealand to preserve an artificial volume of traffic on the trans-Tasman "Empire" link between Auckland and Sydney.

countries from the United States.<sup>1</sup> A similar nonsense applied with regard to trans-Pacific cable communications, which even in 1940 were still being routed through Canada "to protect the business of the British Empire cable system."<sup>2</sup>

While this pathetic little episode was played out, Keith Officer reported from Washington that "there is still strong isolationist feeling" among the American "public [who] view the world situation as one problem and on the Atlantic side at all events do not regard the Far East as a distinct question ... [and] the Administration attitude is based on [this feeling]."<sup>3</sup> Australia was doing little to help its case in America, even though Britain was now almost certain to be at war before the year was out.

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1. Cabinet Submission, 3 August 1939. In DAFP, vol.II, pp164-6. The Minister for Aviation (J.V. Fairbairn) informed the Cabinet that "we should not acquiesce in a refusal of British use of Hawaii when we have such a good bargaining counter in the permission for landings in Australia and New Zealand which are essential to any American service into the South Pacific. We must therefore ... threaten ... to withdraw permission for the American service to New Zealand and perhaps actually withdraw it unless the U.S. Government [permits the British to fly via Hawaii]." It seems not to have occurred to Fairbairn or his colleagues that they might instead offer something as a quid pro quo; as in 1936 with Trade Diversion, they cut off Australia's nose to try and maintain Britain's flabby face.

2. Day, The Great Betrayal, p47. McEwen, Minister for External Affairs, stated that:"the fact that the Empire is at war makes it particularly desirable that the Empire cable route should be protected from a form of competition [from the US] which would militate against its preservation." In other words, with competition more advanced, convenient and cheaper to use. I am all for accepting the 'temper of the times' when interpreting people's actions, but these men seem to have spent too long outside with their hats off.

3. DAFP vol.II, p175.

On 23 August 1939, Menzies told the public that Britain would not go to war alone, and he was not referring to France:

"Misapprehension continues to exist in foreign countries as to the effect of modern constitutional developments in the British Empire. It is true that each of the great British Dominions has had full recognition accorded to its nationhood ... but this independence does not mean separatism ... we are still members of one family, and our family feeling is reinforced [not] weakened by our growth. ... Australia stands where it stood 25 years ago."<sup>1</sup>

Menzies both demeaned his country and overestimated its position. To be older and stronger and still living at 'home' was no achievement. And Australia did not stand where it had in 1914; it had regressed. Nine days later, the Admiralty sent a signal that should have struck terror into Australian hearts: "Winston is back." Two days after that, Menzies performed his "melancholy duty" and informed Australia that it would follow Britain into another war on the wrong side of the globe.

Menzies' motives were both instinctive loyalty to the land he worshiped from afar, and the domestic political advantage he hoped to reap by turning Australia into some kind of industrial 'bastion' of the Empire. By volunteering to raise a 'special [expeditionary] force' he hoped to gain in return British help to establish war industries in Australia that could be turned to peacetime manufacture. Thus the ambition to create domestic aircraft factories producing British designed aircraft; after the war, the factories could be used for production of (British)

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1. DAFP vol.II, p182.



automobiles.<sup>1</sup> He also hesitated to send his expeditionary force overseas - not out of concern for Australia's security in an increasingly volatile regional situation, but to extract assurances that shipping would be provided first for Australian primary products. He gave away the Navy to the British Admiralty almost at once, and almost single-highhandedly destroyed any combat potential then existing in Australia's woefully inadequate Air Force, by reducing it to a training organisation devoted to providing cannon fodder for the RAF. The British Chiefs of Staff were happy to accept the "bonus" of Australian manpower and limited naval materiel.

But they could offer nothing in return, beyond the assurances (often conveyed via their appointees who headed the Australian services) that something would turn up if Australia was threatened. There was no thought now of the strategic absurdity, first admitted in 1930, of Australia sending ships and men to the Mediterranean and Middle East (and Churchill wanted the troops in France and England, too, along with the Airmen), while insisting that Britain do the reverse. The Labor Party offered little opposition to this fatuity; it had its reservations, but its leaders were only slightly less British in

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1. See: David Day, The Great Betrayal; especially Chapters 2-6. This is a sordid little tale of sacrifice of national interest to narrow political ambition. Not only did he wilfully subordinate national interest to his own interests, he also plotted to ensure its continued subjugation to Britain; part of the aim was to ensure exclusion of American aircraft or motor vehicle manufacturers, whose production technologies and organisation were infinitely superior to those of the British. The man should have been impeached.

outlook than Menzies; and no doubt also saw the war as being good for employment and wages.

Churchill did all he could to ensure that Australia was starved of military equipment from both Britain and the United States - especially modern aircraft, even as he exerted continuing pressure for Australia to contribute the maximum possible manpower to the defence of Britain and its position in the Middle East and Mediterranean. Churchill regarded the Dominions as useful livestock, to milked for all they were worth, fed as little as possible, and slaughtered if necessary. And of course he and Roosevelt were already in the process of agreeing that should America finally decide that its public would permit it to enter the war, it would be chiefly to "lift the curse of Hitler from the brow of mankind" before turning to slap down the presumptuous Japanese.

Australia, on no better ground than her Prime Minister's inability and/or unwillingness to see truth of her situation, continued to press for, and when given them swallow, British reassurances regarding the defensibility of the British possessions in Asia. That these were decreasingly believable had no discernible effect on actual preparation for a Japanese strike south; apart from timorous concurrence in the need to keep closed the Burma Road. This in itself helped rouse hostile emotions amongst the many Americans who felt a deep commitment (in principle, of course) to the security of China. Even by September of 1940, the Department of External affairs observed that "the British empire would be in no better position to face Japan in

war" for some months hence, when "two [ancient] battleships of the *Royal Sovereign* class should be in commission." Just what difference this was supposed to make can have appeared then no less relevant a question than it does now - but no-one asked. Criticism was reserved for the Americans, whose "negative and indefinite attitude ... made it apparent that ... the United Kingdom would in practice have to deal alone with Japan."

The US administration, motivated it seems, as much by desire to break once and for all the back of the British Empire,<sup>1</sup> as by the need to stave off the loss to Hitler of Britain itself, was performing in a uniquely useless fashion with regard to problems in Asia; but this was no less true of the British and their kinsmen. It seems not to have occurred to the Departmental briefers of the Australian cabinet that the real problem for Australia was not that the British had to stand alone in Asia; it was that Australia was already alone in Asia, with "the devil to pay and no pitch hot". Casey, now representing at last<sup>2</sup> an

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1. See David Irving, Churchill's War, (New York: Avon Books, 1987). Chapter 37, "The Unsordid Act". Roosevelt certainly seems to have been determined - even to enjoy his opportunity - to make Britain grovel and beg; and go broke. Whatever his flights of fancy, and his attitudes to China seems not to have progressed far beyond this, FDR appears to have firmly grasped the fact that this was America's chance at empire, by breaking both challengers and incumbents for once and for all.

2. He took up his duties as Australian Minister to Washington on 6 March 1940. He reported on 17 May that "events of the last few days have shaken profoundly United States complacency." However, there was "no sign that the United States will come into the war at an early date." Casey remarked upon the "fear on the part of so many [Congressional] candidates that to speak the truth" about the need to aid Britain and France could cost them the Isolationist vote. He later (28 May) saw the President, whose

independent Australian presence in the American capital, believed that nothing could be gained from the Americans until after the Presidential elections in November 1940; and, like Roosevelt, he was none too clear about what might be got after that.<sup>1</sup>

Roosevelt was dissembling though, if not lying outright, when later in the year he still claimed public opinion would not let him move the United States from a stance of material support (for Britain only, under the pressure of Churchill's incessant and as it turned out, excessive demands) to direct involvement in the war: "by September 1940, 53 percent of Americans believed it more important to help Britain defeat Hitler than to stay out of the war. The number rose to 68 percent by January 1941 and remained nearly constant for the rest of the year."<sup>2</sup> Churchill, obsessed with the need to keep Britain secure (and to him, by

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chief concern seemed to be that the British fleet not fall into German hands. See: DAFP vol.III, p306 (Document 251) & p350 (Document 300).

1. Casey reported on 29 May 1940: "The person upon whom I called yesterday [the President] said to me that if legislative measures had to be brought before Congress [to aid the] Allies it would provoke three weeks acid debate that would do more harm than good and might reverse present [positive] public opinion trend." Casey further observed that: "public opinion is the real Government of this country. The divorcing of the Executive cabinet from the Legislature means that the President cannot face Congress up to an issue under threat of a general election. [The] Majority of Congress is opposed to participation [in the war]." The attitude would change only under very visible pressure of changed public opinion, and this looked unlikely: the only person with "any chance of swinging public opinion quickly is the President and he does not believe he could do so unless some specific incident occurs." See: DAFP, vol.III, p354. Document 307.

2. Robert Dallek, The American Style of Foreign Policy, p129.



inference, the whole world) just could not believe that he was being gulled by Roosevelt who, committed to destroying rather than preserving the remains of old empires, was playing Churchill like Heifetz played violin<sup>1</sup>. It was very good domestic politics: the war allowed Roosevelt to give

his ragged nation a sense of empire. Ten millions were unemployed and his New Deal was in disarray, but by plugging in to Churchill's war at the most judicious moment, he would bring wealth and prosperity to his great nation. ... by ruthless power politics and financial huckstering he made it a great power.<sup>2</sup> He blackjacked his allies into parting with their Gold.<sup>2</sup>

And thus into parting with their sovereignty of action. Roosevelt "ran rings around the British" and "regarded Churchill

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1. It seems unfair to say this, considering that the two men did indeed seem to develop considerable mutual regard. But FDR was still devoted first and foremost (and rightly) to his view of American interests, and these had to diverge significantly from Churchill's views about Britain's. Britain was an "old tired power" whose time was up. It had to give way to the USA, Russia and China. David Irving quotes Vice President Henry Wallace's diary: "when there are four people in a poker game and three of them are against the fourth, [FDR said] it is a little hard on the fourth." Wallace took this to mean that FDR regarded the other 'new powers' as his helpmates in dismembering the old, tired one. Interior Secretary Harold Ickes' diary for 19 January 1941 recalled the President's having said that "we have been milking the British financial cow", which was now, however, "about to run dry". See: Irving, Churchill's War, pp484-6.

2. Ibid., pp483-4. Anyone familiar with his work will soon discern that Irving has no love for Americans - but he has even less for Churchill. And he does do his research. Irving provides facts that support my own intuitive suspicion that Roosevelt 'suckered' Churchill, whose belief in British omniscience (especially his own) did not allow him to contemplate the possibility that he could be conned by a mere American naif.

as a pushover - unreliable and tight most of the time".<sup>1</sup> So far as Australia went, it was just one the many pawns on the global gameboard, and no more. Both were now learning the same harsh lesson: "mere sentiment and blood ties count for little."

### **Regional Weakness**

In early 1941 Australian land forces took part in their first major action of the war, the capture of Bardia in formerly Italian-held Libya. The public gloried in the fact that the 'heirs' of the Australian Imperial Force of the Great War had upheld the illustrious tradition of their predecessors. The Australian commander, General Blamey, also reinforced a precedent from late in the first war, by strenuously resisting all British attempts to split his divisions and pepper them throughout British formations. That, and provision of its own logistic support and rear echelon troops, was about as much progress as had been made in Australian practice from twenty-odd years before; there was still no real control over where and when the troops would fight.

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1.Ibid., p484(n) & pp489-91. According to a record kept by Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King. Morgenthau went out ferreting for 'hidden' British assets, and former Vice-President John N. Garner considered the British the richest people, per capita in the world. They should be prepared to spend every last penny "if they care anything about their freedom." Harold Ickes thought his Cabinet colleagues were vultures: "these same people seem to agree that our own safety depends upon Britain's ability to withstand Hitler, and yet ... they wanted to be perfectly sure that England was fighting naked, with bare hands, before they would be willing to go to her aid under the pending Lend-Lease Bill."

Over the next few months, in another echo of the First War, Churchill's heavy-handed bungling in Greece and the Balkans, in the service of his decades-old Mediterranean obsession, threw away all the gains of Wavell's brilliantly successful offensive of early 1941, and led to a costly sideshow in Syria. Besides inflicting appalling hardship on the Royal Navy, the result was heavy losses to two Australian divisions, with a third trapped in the rathole of Tobruk. Menzies had concurred in all these fiascos while in London\*, while failing to win either assurance of British commitment to the Far East or even guarantee of an increased level of war materiel that might be used in Australia for its own defence. Although a dribble of barely trained Australian troops began to reach Singapore, they had no air defence, and there were still no ships for the base. More 'penny packets' were being scattered about the East Indies and Australian Pacific Territories; again without air or artillery support. Roosevelt had agreed to transfer part of the US fleet from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and Australia was still obliged to obtain war materiel through the British Purchasing Commission in Washington. Casey, the Australian minister, had thought this a good thing because it kept Australia in the "empire Dollar pool"; and thus last in line for anything at all.

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\* Which he evidently found a good deal more congenial than Canberra. He was there for three months in early 1941, when the threat of German invasion had passed and the threat Australia steadily increased. He seems to have spent more time moaning about Churchill's dictatorial ways (Which strongly resembled Menzies' own methods of 'Cabinet Control'), and plotting to have Churchill ousted - in favour of, of all people, himself! See David Day, The Great Betrayal, Chapters 6&7.

Australian refusal, after the debacles in Greece and Crete, and needlessly heavy losses in Syria, to knuckle under any further to the British in the Middle East caused intense friction with Churchill<sup>1</sup>, especially after Menzies did Australia a favour and alienated enough of his colleagues to lose the Prime Ministership in August 1941. But Australia did not bring home its troops or its combat-trained aircrews from the Middle East until well after Japan struck.

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1. Blamey (GOC Australian Imperial Force [i.e., Army Corps] and nominal Deputy CinC Middle East) demanded withdrawal of the Australian troops from Tobruk and their replacement by available, fully trained and fresh troops from South Africa. The health of the troops had begun to deteriorate rapidly after months of siege. Churchill threw tantrums by cablegram "I trust ... you will weigh very carefully the immense responsibility ... you would assume before history by depriving Australia of the glory of holding Tobruk until Victory is won..". The way things were going under Churchill's masterly direction of the war, this looked to be no time soon. Fadden (interim Prime Minister) told Churchill to get on with it. Auchinleck (General, CinC M.E.) said to Blamey that he would have to ask for his relief - presumably to be replaced by someone more complaisant. Blamey's reply: "Go ahead and do it." See: DAFP vol.V, pp105-6 & pp111-2. Also Carlyon, I Remember Blamey, p68.



#### CHAPTER 4 CHANGING HORSES: THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

The absolute unreality of the British, other allied and Australian Governments' preparations for what was now an inevitable war in the Pacific is shown by a submission presented to the Australian War Cabinet in October 1941. After four months' haggling with the Netherlands government-in-exile in London, over the titular definition of an Australian representative to Batavia, the Dutch had informed Australia that it could not appoint a minister-in-residence to liaise with the authorities in Batavia. The Netherlands East Indies were only Crown Colonies and did not deserve a diplomatic posting of that rank. Contact at ministerial level would have to be conducted through London. Cabinet mulled this over for two weeks, and then decided that it might be alright for the High Commissioner in London to be accredited to the Dutch government there. The Dutch, with an admirable disdain for reality, remained unconvinced about the merits of having an Australian Consul-General appointed to Batavia; they were "very sensitive of any action which would in any way suggest that the Netherlands East Indies is anything but a dependency of Holland"<sup>1</sup>. No-one went to Batavia, and Bruce finally presented his credentials in February 1942, by which time

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1. DAFP, vol.V. pp137-41 & 174-5.

the Netherlands East Indies were already being absorbed into the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Military preparations were no more impressive.

### **Japan Strikes South**

On 8 December 1941, Japanese troops landed in Thailand and Northern Malaya, and Australia declared war. To that point, there had still been no effective allied consultation regarding the defence of the Southeast Asian 'barrier'. Three days later, Australia's special representative to the British War Cabinet in London, Sir Earle Page, was told by Churchill that, in effect, nothing could immediately be done to remedy the weakness in Asia. Further naval reinforcement was impossible (the Prince of Wales and Repulse were sunk the day before). More aircraft manufacturing equipment - but no aircraft - would be sent to Australia. Two days later (13 December), America had reciprocated Hitler's declaration of war, and Foreign Minister Evatt sent a telegram, over the Prime Minister's signature, to President Roosevelt. It said, inter alia:

"... we [are] heartened and strengthened by the knowledge that the English-speaking world ... [is] now arrayed against the common foe. ...  
When the risks against Australia were not so great as [now], we sent some [all!] of our naval and air forces as far afield as Britain and we have three Army divisions in the Middle East. We have also contributed several thousand men to the Empire Air Training scheme and hope to be able to continue our part in it.<sup>1</sup>

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1. DAFP, Vol.V (July 1941-June 1942). pp305-6

This last was an extraordinary thing to say when all along Australia's greatest worry next to the fabled 'main fleet' had been the inadequacy of air defences in Malaya at least, even if their block-headed British Chief Of Air Staff insisted that fighters need not be got for the defence of Australia. He apparently believed that 'something would turn up' to sink Japan's aircraft carriers and destroy their land-based air fleets. But what was needed at once was, indeed, modern combat aircraft and more warships; the lack of torpedo-gunboats and destroyers was as critical as any lack of heavy warships in impeding the Japanese advance in Malaya and the islands\*. Curtin sent in a shopping list, it appears, but mentioned no specifics in his covering cablegram, merely pointing out that "our Military resources are insufficient" and asking the President and his "Service Authorities [to] consider what help you may be able to give in providing forces to deny these bases [in Australia's Pacific territories and in New Caledonia] to the enemy."

Roosevelt's reply was non-committal; the "Question is ... now being studied ... In the meantime", Roosevelt felt sure,  
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\* The Japanese were able to outflank the British in Malaya by sea as well as on the land. There were almost no craft of shallow draft able to intercept their coastal troop movements. The potential value of destroyers as a means of countering both invasion convoys and logistic support efforts, in conjunction with aircraft, was borne out by the near-successes of Admiral Glassford's ancient "four-pipers" in the NEI, and most dramatically in the battles around Guadalcanal. The British also rued the lack of vessels able to get into the shallows off the coast of Burma, and efforts at defence and offense in the ill-charted waters of Papua-New Guinea suffered similarly from lack of the appropriate naval units. The same would have applied no less in the event of a Japanese attempt to effect landings in the north of Australia.

Australian "forces are taking all possible steps to protect these areas against enemy attack."<sup>1</sup> But there were no steps to take: Curtin needed for once (probably once only!) to take a leaf from Churchill's book and make not plaintive noises but determined growls: "Give us the tools and we'll finish the job"! Without them, Australia could not even get started. And Britain had already arrogated to itself the role of Imperial spokesman in the staff discussions with the United States that finally were to get underway on 15 December. Evatt insisted to Casey that Australia must be separately represented at these:

"... or our great needs will be overlooked. It is obvious that in some respects the views of the United Kingdom representatives will differ from our own both in relation to supplies and forces. The Government is far from satisfied with the results of the policy of subordinating our requirements to those of others."<sup>2</sup>

Evatt, now galled by the danger to his country, perhaps forgot that Australia had for most of the past 27 months (during which he had been a member of the bi-partisan Advisory War Council<sup>3</sup>) of the war been a willing, even eager, subordinate. Now

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1. Ibid., p306(n).

2. Ibid. p316.

3. As had Labor Leader Curtin, who had declined to enter into a 'national unity' style of government like Britain's; he thought a loyal opposition might be of more service, and undoubtedly figured on Menzies losing the support of the Independent members who gave him his slender majority in the House. Curtin and his colleagues asked a lot of the right questions, and expressed sensible concerns at Australia's denudation of troops and the gross imbalance in its development, structure and employment of especially the Air Force - but they were not any better than Menzies at resisting the both the palliative phrases of the British and the belief that it would "all come right on the



it would remain one, but less willingly. Curtin telegraphed Churchill, expressing concern at the paucity of Malayan air defences and the lack of sea-air cooperation that had contributed to loss of the *Prince Of Wales* and *Repulse*. He was evidently shocked by the gross inaccuracy of an earlier appreciation of Japanese fighting capability and materiel quality. "There is no reason to believe that Japanese standards are even comparable with those of the Italians" - a reference to the derisive assessment of the British Chiefs of Staff given to (and swallowed by) Menzies in April 1941. It was the product of unwarranted "complacency" and the Italian comparison further invited the equally unwarranted assumption that inferior numbers (and inferior aircraft such as the "quite adequate" Brewster Buffalo) were acceptable.<sup>1</sup> Churchill did not reply, and the Dominions office promised little more than "urgent" discussions with the United States to "re-examine" the situation.

In Washington, Casey was worried by Roosevelt's non-committal reply to Curtin, and went to see the President and "reminded him verbally of the principal points in the Prime Minister's telegrams ... which I had got to him [four days ago]".  
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...Continued...

night." And being of the same racialist cast of mind, were it seems quite happy to believe (without any questioning) the ridiculous assertions that the Japanese were "not air-minded" (nor were they air-headed!), or that they were short sighted, and so-on. It is extraordinary that these people, who had fostered a fear of the Yellow Peril, which they had used as the basis of national security policy for so long, were now so willing to believe that the peril was a 'paper tiger'.

1.DAFP vol. V. pp317-8.

Roosevelt told Casey to "please tell your government we have already started", but cautioned that "he regarded the South-west Pacific as one area and that it was necessary to concentrate attention and support on the most important areas. *The war had to be regarded from a geographical rather than a national point of view*"(my emphasis)<sup>1</sup>. Thus within ten days of the eruption of the crisis in the Pacific, it was apparent that even the forcing of America's hand by Japan's strike at Pearl Harbour brought little prospect of a real US effort to defend Australia.<sup>2</sup>

By 19 December, the Australian government had an honest and presciently accurate evaluation of the Malayan situation from its representative in Singapore: "the air strength here [is] not adequate for protection or attack" and no more Australian troops should be committed unless it could be assured that "they will not be abandoned with those already here". Penang had already been "virtually abandoned", but the British were suppressing the news for 'morale' purposes. Unless *modern* aircraft and *operationally trained* aircrew and troops were sent immediately,

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1. DAFP, vol.V, pp323-4.

2. And in truth its retention as a military base area does not seem to have been essential to the strategy pursued by the US in the central Pacific. MacArthur's loudly publicised campaigns in the southwest Pacific were largely a waste of time after the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, the successful 'turn of the tide' in New Guinea, and the securing of Guadalcanal. As it was, Australia needed the Air and Naval support that American forces could provide, but the campaigns in New Guinea in particular benefited little from American ground troops that might have been better sent elsewhere.

the position looked hopeless<sup>1</sup>. Curtin finally laid it on the line with Roosevelt. Lack of air support threatened a "repetition of Greece and Crete", and the fall of Singapore, said Curtin, would mean the isolation of the Philippines; although knew, via Casey, that they were as good as written off already:

"The reinforcements earmarked by the United Kingdom government for despatch [to Malaya-Singapore] seem to us to be utterly inadequate especially in relation to aircraft [and] especially fighters. ... small reinforcements are of little avail ... It is in your power to meet the situation ... [and Australia] would gladly accept [a] United States commander in [the] Pacific area."<sup>2</sup>

Churchill was sent a duplicate of this cable, which brought forth a wounded response<sup>3</sup> from Atlee (Churchill had gone to Washington), but no immediate and practical result. But as Bowden reported from Singapore, "anything that is not powerful, modern and immediate is futile... [otherwise] ...Singapore must fall." He was telling the government that if the fight was not be conducted properly (with powerful, modern, immediate air support), it should evacuate its troops, not send more raw reinforcements. Decisions had to be made in "hours, not days"<sup>4</sup>.

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1. DAFP vol.V, pp328-9.

2. DAFP vol.V, pp341-2.

3. DAFP vol.V, pp348-9. It concluded: "Any judgment ... on the conduct of operations must await a full report of the facts, which we have not yet received." The cable was sent on 23 December; if they didn't know the facts a after 15 days of operations, it was a poor reflection of their commanders and their faith in them.

4. DAFP vol.V, pp349-50. Report also sent on 23 December 1941. Someone knew what was going on!

On Christmas Day, Evatt wired Casey, and told him to set up, under the Australian trade Commissioner, Australia's own War Supplies Procurement organisation, which would absorb the staff presently working under the British Purchasing Commission. But he was too late; Churchill and Stalin had already cornered the market, and neither would let go of his share. In London, Bruce spoke to Ambassador Winant, warning that Churchill was "over-insuring" Britain against a diminished threat; Winant sympathised, but nothing came of it. Casey was also told to address the "lack of urgency" being shown by both the US and the British chiefs of staff (they had not even met until 14 December; as Casey had then observed, "you are probably wondering why [not until now]") with regard to the air situation especially. He reported back that "there are no British aircraft of any [use] closer than the Middle East." They could not fly direct to Malaya because the Japanese already controlled the air in southern Burma and over the Peninsula; and there was no British aircraft carrier available that would not take a month to arrive. The Americans "cannot be induced to risk sending one of their aircraft carriers from Honolulu to Singapore or even Australia."<sup>1</sup>

#### **Curtin Turns to America**

Both Evatt and Curtin were getting "twitchy"; Evatt accusing his representatives abroad of not pushing hard enough for Australian interests, Curtin commencing an acrimonious correspondence with Churchill that reviewed the whole sorry

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1. DAFP vol.V, pp369-70.



progress of the Anglo-Australian alliance since the 1937 Imperial Conference. Churchill was especially upset by Curtin's public remarks on 27 December, in which the Australian Prime Minister in effect stated his belief that Britain had hoodwinked Australia and the only hope now lay with America:

"... we refuse to accept the dictum that the Pacific struggle must be treated as a subordinate segment of the general conflict. ... there must be a concerted plan ... determined upon hurling Japan back.

The Australian Government therefore regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan.

Without inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia now looks to America, free of any pang as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

Churchill, and a good section of the Australian press, regarded this as close to imperial treason; The Sydney Morning Herald sent copies of its own adverse editorial response over to America, where it was reproduced to give the impression that Australia, the idle and ungrateful, was simply offering a transfer of colonial stewardship to America from Great Britain. And to some extent it was. Curtin was acting at least five years too late. But so was the public: "Wake Up Australians" pleaded the New South Wales Premier in early January. McKell railed against the attitude that had been allowed to develop "there has arisen ... a slackness that seems to say : let the other fellow do it". Did Australians want to wait until they were scratched

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1. Crowley, vol.2, pp50-2.

before revealing the tartar within, he asked?<sup>1</sup> They surely did, and moaned all the time that the other fellow wouldn't do it for national defence<sup>2</sup>. By the fall of Singapore, Curtin had finally steeled himself to tell his countrymen what they did not want to hear: "hours previously devoted to sport and leisure must now be given to duties of war."<sup>3</sup> What a dreadful thing to say! What a dreadful thing to do!

The agitation increasingly displayed by himself and Evatt at lack of consultation in Allied war plans was reflected in their early proposal for a Pacific War Council. Neither Churchill nor Roosevelt felt they really had the time or the inclination to be bothered with Australian views. Curtin and Evatt - all of them in Canberra- knew why. None had demurred, in opposition or in government, with the basic soundness of the policy being pursued up to late 1941, by which Australia sent comparatively fewer

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1. Crowley, vol.2, pp 53-4.

2. But by this time the public must hardly have known what to think. They had been alternately scared and soothed almost since the beginning of the war by politicians and newspapermen struggling to reconcile their wishes with reality. Menzies had told them that the Empire Air Training Scheme was putting Australia "well on the way to being a great air power". All those it was training in the country and in Canada could be "organised at relatively short notice into an effective striking force" - flying what? But no-one asked. (see: David Day, The Great Betrayal, pp33-4) W.M. Hughes (still alive, and now Navy Minister) told Australians in early 1941 that those, like Curtin, who declared the situation in the "Far East" to be grave, were "nervy". "whatever happens in the Far East", he said, "...Australia will be fighting for her life ... with the rest of the Empire against Germany. ... If Germany wins, then the dark cloud in the Far East ... will cover the whole heavens." Like a cracked record. (See: DAFP, vol.II, pp415-6. Document 303.)

3. Crowley, vol.2, pp58-60.

forces overseas (than in 1914-18) to fight for Britain<sup>1</sup>, pursued a policy of appeasing Japan to cover its nakedness at home, and tried so far as possible to both reap a commercial profit and maintain domestic life as usual. Australia was squawking about Singapore now precisely because it had been content for so long to play a passive role in determining its own affairs. And now it lacked the power, even if it had suddenly discovered the desire, to do more. On 12 February, Australia's able servant in Singapore, V.G. Bowden, reported that "except as a fortress and a battlefield, Singapore has ceased to function". Three days later it surrendered, and 17,000 Australians went into captivity.\* Japan was supreme at sea and in the air; the East Indies must inevitably fall too. And then Australia would be alone. The government did not appreciate quite how alone.

#### **Australia: Desirable But Non-Essential**

In an appreciation written for General Marshall in February 1942, Brigadier-General Dwight D. Eisenhower noted that both army and Navy "have consistently agreed that ... the US should adopt the strategic defensive in the Pacific and devote its major

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1. They nonetheless saw a good deal more fighting, proportionately, than did the British after 1940. As Cadogan (War Cabinet Secretary) despairingly soliloquised on 9 February 1942: "Our generals are no use, and do our men fight? We always seem to have 'Indian Brigades' or Colonials (that word, still!) in the front line. ... what will happen if Germans get a footing here? Our army is the mockery of the world." See David Dilks (ed.), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-45, p433.

\* And sadly, Bowden himself was captured whilst trying to escape Singapore, and summarily executed. This was not learned until after the War, despite the fact that Bowden's name figured prominently amongst those whom the government was attempting to repatriate in an exchange of diplomatic personnel.

offensive effort across the Atlantic." He more or less assumed that the continental United States and Hawaii would be free of threat of major attack. He observed that the US must distinguish between the essential and the desirable to accomplish its war goals. The critical areas thus became Britain, Russia and the Middle East and India; "less critical advantages [would] accrue to [the Axis Powers] through conquest of Australia and the islands to the east thereof." Amongst the "things that are highly desirable and approach the necessary, listed in the order of their importance", the security of Australia ranked fifth of seven 'important' areas<sup>1</sup>. "We know that Australia can go and Britain can still hold on" said Prime Minister Curtin in December 1941, as he sought to install the United States as Australia's new protector; but he omitted to note that America could more than hold on whether or not the entire British Empire collapsed - and the latter event was anyway one of its long-standing aims.

Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, disagreed with Eisenhower's stark view of US priorities, primarily because he was not one of the "Europe first" group in US strategic policy circles. But he did not advance any really convincing strategic argument for giving Australia and New Zealand any higher priority amongst the 'desirable' objectives of US strategy, other than the observation that they were "white man's countries" which the US should "not allow to be overrun by Japanese because of the

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1. Barclay & Siracusa, Australian-American Relations Since 1945, pp13-14.



repercussions among the non-white races of the world."<sup>1</sup> White Australia would have heartily endorsed these words, the very essence of yellow perilism and "blood-brotherhood" so long and so hopefully used as the justification for hiding under the skirts of mother England.

#### COLD COMFORT FROM UNCLE SAM

As the Japanese set about swallowing up the rest of the Netherlands East Indies, Evatt and Bruce tried to encourage Stafford Cripps to lead a palace coup to depose Churchill<sup>2</sup> while Curtin demanded the return to Australia of the Australian troops remaining in the Middle East and those in transit via India. Churchill wanted them all to go to Burma, and another fight developed. The Australian government was more than a little surprised to find that FDR supported their *bete noir*. Casey informed Evatt on 17 February 1942:

"Harry Hopkins asked me privately today whether ... if the United States undertook to send [considerable] forces to Australia, Australia was likely to agree to two Australian divisions from the Middle East being diverted to say India or Burma, which the President naturally regards as of very great importance to hold."<sup>3</sup> [Doubtless based upon Eisenhower's memorandum].

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1. Barclay & Siracusa, pp 15-16.

2. DAFP vol. V. pp525-7; 530-2. Interestingly, Harold MacMillan in his Memoirs says that "Evatt ... was brilliant, but, as it seemed to me, somewhat undependable. He reminded me of Stafford Cripps." Harold MacMillan, Riding the Storm, 1956-59, New York, Harper and Row, 1971. p405.

3. DAFP vol. V. pp533-4.

Casey seemed to think this a good idea, and offered a few ideas on how shipping might be made available for the 50 to 60,000 GIs it was proposed should sometime arrive to defend Australia in the absence of its own (battle-tested) troops. It was a poor deal, though Bruce in London, who was by now more openly sceptical than ever of Churchill's inspirations, still thought it might build up Australia's stock of brownie points with an otherwise rather unsympathetic U.K. government (though Bruce also praised the Dutch government's "statesmanlike" judgement that further reinforcement of the collapsing NEI was futile)<sup>1</sup>. Curtin, overwhelmed by the looming consequence of a quarter-century's dubious promises and false assumptions, declined - emphatically:

mainly owing to our efforts overseas, the home defence position is, in the opinion of our Chiefs of General Staff, not satisfactory. Therefore we cannot approve of the proposed diversion.

The pressure came on. Cranbourne (Dominion Secretary) pleaded for Australia to "leave open the destination" of the 6th and 9th Divisions. "More troops might be badly needed in Burma". Would Australia be prepared to give up one of its own divisions in exchange for an American division?<sup>2</sup> It was a silly question with a simple answer: Not on your life! Cranbourne must have been too sympathetic to Australia's views. He was replaced in the dialogue by Labour leader Attlee, who now told Australia that  
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1. Ibid, pp539-40.

2. Ibid, p541.

"your greatest support in this hour of peril must come from the United States" whose "President attaches supreme importance to keeping open the connection with China without which his bombing offensive against Japan cannot be started"<sup>1</sup>. Unless Australia did as Churchill wanted, Attlee went on, "a very grave effect will be produced upon the Washington circle on whom you are so largely dependent." All the veils were lifted: do what London wants or get stymied with your alternative protector. Australia didn't, and it was. Hopkins tried it on with Casey again on the 20 February; so did Frankfurter, and Roosevelt followed up the next day with a message to Curtin.<sup>2</sup>

FDR assured Curtin that 27,000 American troops "fully equipped in every respect" were on their way. So what?, an Australian might have asked. The Americans were not that good in the first war; why would they be any better in the second? Roosevelt now called Australia the "right flank" of the allied position in the Pacific (it wasn't; it was the 'underbelly' in much the same way Churchill's obsession, Italy, was to Europe). "We Americans can better handle the reinforcement of Australia and the right flank" he said. Fine, but by now Australians wanted to fight for themselves for a change. Give us the tools! Without reservation as to any ties of kinship, Roosevelt went on: "if .pa Burma goes it seems to me that our whole position, including

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1. Ibid, pp546-7.

2. Ibid, pp548-51.

that of Australia, will be extremely strained."<sup>1</sup>

All of a sudden, Australia was important again - because Churchill had complained to Roosevelt, who already had plighted his troth to getting Hitler first. The same sentiments which Roosevelt had not too long ago been prepared to use as his excuse for avoiding war, he now refused to recognise as Australia's motivation for wanting its best soldiers back home: the public wanted them, and not to avoid something, but to deal with it. In contrast to his insipid, nine days delayed reply to Curtin's appeal of late December for aircraft, guns and credit, Roosevelt now discovered that "your men have been fighting all over the world" and he now knew "full well of great sacrifices which Australia has made." All that aside, he got to the sting: please "reconsider your decision and order the division now en route to Australia to move with all speed to ... Burma."<sup>2</sup>

Australia, for a few precious moments, grew up. To Atlee: "we have every right to expect [our men] to be returned as soon as possible with adequate escorts to ensure their safe arrival".<sup>3</sup> (The latter no problem; many of the "British" escorts in the Indian Ocean were manned by the RAN). To Roosevelt: his message had "affected us profoundly" - and he could read the message sent to Britain<sup>4</sup>. Evatt followed up to the Third Secretary -  
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1. Ibid, p550.

2. Ibid.

3. DAFP, vol. V. pp551-3.

4. Ibid, p553.



obviously a confidant - in Washington, with a message to Justice Frankfurter. Evatt clearly had trust and disciple-like confidence in his (Frankfurter's) ability to influence events (and "Casey .. does not appear to have been at all useful"), enjoining him to "try and explain to Hopkins that the President's good will should not be used by Churchill as if it were his own especial property".<sup>1</sup>

Frankfurter's replies to Evatt were short and to the point - typical of a busy man with more on his mind than an Australian Foreign Minister trying to change the past and interfere with the future.<sup>2</sup> Evatt still poured his heart out:

".. we are anxious about the President's attitude. Already promises of deliveries of aircraft here have been greatly whittled down ... and it is feared that the pressure of the U.K. against aid to the Pacific is still too strong. ... we are very worried ... over the side-tracking of our plan for direct contact with the USA in plans for the prosecution of the war. Churchill's elaborate machinery has prevented us from meeting the USA as a partner on any council or committee whatever."<sup>3</sup>

Evatt had now, under the great pressure of war, discovered nationalism. His ambition undoubtedly did not go onto a back-burner; but he had it seems actually found something bigger than mere politics. He concluded his *cri de coeur* to Frankfurter with what could be said to be the "guts" of Australian foreign policy

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1. Ibid, p556.

2. Ibid, pp550-1.

3. Ibid, p557.

ever since -as conceived by its promoters, if not necessarily as seen or practised by its parliamentary supervisors.

"At present we are informed of decisions and have little or no effective voice in their making. Yet we are an allied country whose contribution and losses are proportionately far greater than any other Dominion or even the UK. The President should realise that the only basis of democratic control is participation by all in the general plan. As it is the main military advisers lead us from one disaster to another ... [with] a combination of Conservatism, incompetence and lack of valour. It is not only Australia I am thinking of, but your country and Britain which I love deeply."<sup>1</sup>

It hardly mattered, any of it. Rangoon was becoming a ghost-town only nine days later, and within a fortnight fell overripe into the hands of Japan; before the Australian troops (of infinite importance to us, said the Governor<sup>2</sup>, in a tribute to the mythic reputation of the Digger, and a swingeing slight at the performance of the - atrociously under-equipped and under-prepared - British forces) would even have arrived. Churchill and Roosevelt both probably felt that, even if Burma were lost before the Australians could arrive and somehow strike the enemy dead in his tracks, the troops (experienced and cohesive, and above all well-led) could be diverted to India.

By mid-March 1942, it was becoming very clear that despite the unceasing efforts of Evatt, neither Roosevelt nor Churchill was interested in giving Australia any real say in the direction of the war, although Roosevelt now seemed to believe in "the

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1.Ibid.

2.Louis Allen Burma - THE Longest War. p47

imperative necessity" of holding Australia<sup>1</sup>. Hopkins believed that there would be set up a south-west Pacific Council, but it would be largely superfluous to the conduct of the war. The Australian government would be invited to comment on decisions already agreed between Washington and London.<sup>2</sup> At about the same time, Australia became aware that General Douglas MacArthur had handed over the starving remnant of his command in the Philippines to General Wainwright, and escaped the beleaguered islet of Corregidor, headed for Australia. He reached Darwin on 17 March, and four days later was in Melbourne. While MacArthur was in transit, Roosevelt appointed him Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Australian (later amended to South West Pacific) Area; thus prematurely acceding to an Australian request for the same action. It reached the President the day after his decision.

#### **The Time of the Hero - MacArthur Takes Command**

Had Admiral Ernest King come to Australia, he would have received a rapturous reception, and probably an honorary (British) knighthood for services to racial purity - as it was, the rapture was expended wastefully on a beaten American general (or Filipino Field Marshal, according to taste) whose conduct to that point should have made him a prime candidate for a sideways

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1.DAFP, vol. V, pp640-1.

2.Ibid.

move, if not retirement.<sup>1</sup> Australia thought it was getting America's finest: on 25 March, after some cynical political calculus by Marshall, Stimson and Roosevelt, the President had awarded MacArthur the Congressional Medal of Honour for 'morale reasons'. The citation claimed bravery in personally supervising operations on Bataan: MacArthur had visited his sorely afflicted troops there just once.<sup>2</sup> There was a marked contrast between the hero's reception accorded MacArthur, and the dark mutterings that were heard regarding the similar conduct of Australian Major General H. Gordon Bennett\*. But "since January [1942] a 'MacArthur craze' had swept over America" involving not only the yellow press but the hysterical response of in particular the

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1. It was not merely MacArthur's conduct of operations in the Philippines after the outbreak of war. He could rightly have been held no less responsible for the fairly poor disposition and campaign tactics of the American-Filipino forces, not to mention his unimpressive performance prior to that. There is evidence that Quezon was fed up with him and was prepared to have him replaced. See Michael Schaller, Douglas MacArthur, the Far Eastern General, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989. Eisenhower, who admittedly had no affection for MacArthur, but who showed himself quite able to suffer the antics of brilliant soldiers such as George S. Patton, sternly questioned MacArthur's performance in the Philippines, and considered the decision to order him to leave Corregidor was a political cave-in to "editorials and public opinion", in which the General had been lionised, due mainly to the fact that his troops were about the only Americans anywhere in contact with an enemy, leaving aside the 'forgotten Navy' of Admiral Hart's Asiatic Fleet.

2. Michael Schaller, MacArthur, pp62-3.

\*Who on his return from Singapore was roundly criticised for "running out" on his men, and despite some tactical victories over which he had presided, was 'kicked upstairs' to command of forces in Western Australia, from which he eventually retired, having had long enough to 'take the hint', in 1944. The big difference was that Bennett left on his own initiative, and MacArthur got ordered. But one wonders what he would have done had the order not come.



Republican party, some of whose more senior members already had decided MacArthur could be presidential material in 1944 if he "[got] out alive". Roosevelt, and his administration, wanted to 'bury' MacArthur in Australia, which Interior Secretary Harold Ickes believed was the "right place ... thousands of miles away from American newspapers"<sup>1</sup>. They reckoned without the General's press machine; by June, MacArthur's staff had already managed to portray him as the Saviour of the South. Roosevelt belatedly observed that MacArthur's record in the Philippines up to and including the "day of infamy" differed little from that of Admiral Kimmel and General Short, who "face Court-Martial charges of laxity at Pearl Harbour". His subsequent conduct, said FDR, was "criminal" rather than heroic.

Australia's terrified politicians, their willingness to accept a foreign messiah finely tuned by Japanese air raids in northern Australia<sup>2</sup>, were only too happy to strew palm leaves in the arrogant American's path; worse, they were only too willing to virtually abdicate direction of the war in the South Pacific to him and his truculent and sycophantic staff, until the time

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1. Ibid, p64.

2. Darwin was attacked on 19 February 1942, in two separate raids, by 81 aircraft from Nagumo's carrier group and 54 land-based aircraft of the (Navy) First Attack Force. This heavy raid was the precursor of numerous - but sporadic, and often light - strikes across the whole of northern Australia, from Broome in the west to Townsville in the east.

when intercession was too late\*. Roosevelt naturally encouraged the belief that Australia had been granted the services of one of America's military wunderkind; but things worked rather differently. What FDR had done was remove to the antipodes a potential rival; where with luck, the insignificance of the campaigns to be waged would render him publicly invisible and politically impotent in America. Roosevelt was still not too worried what happened to Australia which he "would rather lose ... than have the Russians collapse."<sup>1</sup> By this time Russia was getting in a month more aircraft, tanks and other materiel than Australia thought it would need to run an entire war.

Initially, Curtin saw MacArthur almost as the Aztecs saw Cortez: a white god come again to lead his people to a better life. The American may have been self-promoting and self-deluded, but he was no fool, and played cleverly to the obsessions of his audience in Canberra. He maintained, to the Government's great satisfaction, a ceaseless barrage of complaint that materiel

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\* Interestingly enough, MacArthur also seems to have got the support of the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Defence, Sir Frederick Shedden, who apparently had little time for Australian officers who he regarded as his intellectual inferiors. Perhaps they were, but they knew a lot, especially by 1942, about fighting wars; and apart from the Churchill-induced debacles of Greece and Crete, they had mostly brought in winners. Perhaps, as with so many, apparently, MacArthur's regal postures and florid phraseology were what convinced Shedden that here was a man of destiny. Admiral Hart, ridiculed to the limits of forbearance pre-war by MacArthur ("get yourself a fleet, Tommy, then you'll belong") thought "Douglas is ... no longer altogether sane [and] may not have been for a long time." See Michael Schaller, Douglas MacArthur. pp49-50.

1. Ted Morgan, FDR, a Biography. New York: Touchstone, 1985. p637. Indeed, he would rather have lost "anything else" at all.

shortages and lack of troops were thwarting his plans to save Australia and liberate the Pacific Islands and return to the Philippines. Until March, Curtin and Evatt had still been lobbying for materiel mainly in the wrong direction - toward London. But Evatt's own pointed observation that Churchill was claiming lack of shipping "yet shipping comes here from the United Kingdom in ballast" should have made it clear once and for all that British assurances of support would remain largely the promise of "jam tomorrow". Evatt now thought that

if MacArthur fights hard and he receives strong support from the Government - if necessary by carefully considered public statements - the flow of supplies to Australia could be made reasonably satisfactory.<sup>1</sup>

The Australian government was volunteering to become part of the MacArthur chorus, in the hope of material benefit for its forces. But it was mainly the Americans who got reinforced; Roosevelt evidently had no illusion that it was essential for America's self-image (and for his public image) that America, not Australia, be seen as the successful "great white hope" of the Southern Hemisphere.

MacArthur seduced the government's strategic ingenues into belief in his omnipotence, while demonstrating few other redeeming qualities in practice. Certainly his performance as a theatre commander was fairly average - the main practical virtue of the SWPA command was the fortuitous appointment of General George Kenney as the Army Air Force (and hence Allied Air Forces)

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1. DAFP, vol.V, p756.

commander. It was his efforts, prodigious when compared to Brett's<sup>1</sup>, that allowed the Australian troops in New Guinea to gradually get the better of their enemy (rather than just grimly hold out against him), and eventually inflict upon him his first clear defeats on land. The first of these, in August 1942, was the repulse of the Japanese landing at Milne Bay, during which the Australian commanders were subjected to ceaseless and pointless harassment from MacArthur's ignorant staff, among whom he had ensured that not one Australian would be included.

For none of which was any credit given by the publicity-crazed potentate, who however seemed to expect, not unrealistically, that Australian commanders would make more effort to publicise their own successes; after all, MacArthur announced 'his' weeks before they occurred.<sup>2</sup> But Australia's Army CinC (and titular commander of Allied Land Forces), General Blamey, had no instinct whatsoever for public relations. This may have suited him, but it left Australian troops feeling pretty fed  
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1. See Lex Macaulay, Battle of the Bismarck Sea, Chapter 1. Kenney's first and most vital contribution was to "energise" the well-manned, under performing maintenance and support staffs of both American and Australian air forces. This had the vital effect in the USAAF, which had most of the modern transport and combat aircraft, of drastically improving serviceability rates and therefore actually getting some effort out of the hundreds of aircraft already available but not being properly used.

2. And that indeed was part of the problem. The Australians were infuriated by fatuous communiques from MacArthur that wildly exaggerated not only what had been gained, but what was expected to be gained by 'rapid advance' across perhaps the worst fighting terrain in the world. And even the good men on MacArthur's staff admitted their inexperience. See: D.M. Horner, Crisis of Command, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1978. Chapters 6&7.



up.<sup>1</sup> Their feelings were not helped by the knowledge in the upper staff levels - which as ever went down the 'grapevine'- that MacArthur had early on stated that Australians 'would not fight'<sup>2</sup> (where had he been in France?) and he needed more Americans; who performed abysmally on their first few outings. Australian soldiers quickly went sour on Dugout Doug, and in time so did their commanders and even the politicians. But it was not only the idiosyncrasies of the American commander that led to a situation in which, the worst already having been overcome, "trans-Pacific disharmony was indeed overt and flourishing by late 1942." A good deal of this disharmony originated not in the military command but in the contacts between the two governments. A key factor was the abrasive personality of the Australian

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1. Norman Carlyon, ADC to General Blamey for much of the war, openly has stated that "one of the few blind spots in [Blamey's] nature was his failure to see the need for public relations." I Remember Blamey, Melbourne: Sun-Papermac, 1980, p135.

2. The American headquarters, frankly, panicked as the Japanese advanced. General Kenney's air force commanders moaned to him that they might lose their airfields - Kenney never went to see General Rowell, who had already told the Americans there was no danger of any of the strips then being used having to be yielded to the enemy. He did decide against defending one strip which had been prepared but was not in use. MacArthur seems to have got the wind up. He sent his "would not fight" message to Washington chiefly as a means of justifying a greater allocation of American troops to ensure he could eventually go it alone without the Australians - he would not assign Americans to their command unless absolutely necessary (as when after they got beaten in November). MacArthur was also trying to justify getting a greater permanent slice of US Navy support when he once again libeled the Australians: "The enemy's defeat at Milne Bay must not be accepted as a measure of relative fighting capacity of the troops involved. The decisive factor was the complete surprise (this was hogwash!) gained over him by our (and the royal plural!) preliminary concentration of superior forces." See: Horner, op. cit. above.

Foreign Minister, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, whose "great qualities did not include the gift of empathy."<sup>1</sup>.

**To The Limits of Mateship:  
Evatt Attempts to Capture the U.S.**

Evatt had a fine forensic mind, as well might a man who had been a high court justice *before* entering politics, and he was (or became) much more of a nationalist than most of his predecessors - and colleagues, for that matter. His performance was in some ways a forewarning of the stance that would be taken by the leaders of many newly-emergent nations in the post-war era. He was prepared to blame just about anything on the perfidy of the great powers (and he had no shortage of valid reasons for this), but he failed to see that their attitude was basically predicated on the belief that you get out what you put in; and the value of both input and output were assessed by large allies in terms rather different from one's own.

Evatt the Lawyer wanted the major league to perform the works that would give substance to the words he provided; this was not much of a bargain either for them or for his country. His postwar successors were mostly lawyers too; like Evatt, they perpetuated the tendency noted by Paul Hasluck<sup>2</sup> to argue about

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1. Barclay, p13.

2. Paul Hasluck, The Government and the People 1939-41, p49. Hasluck observes that they were to argue more about technical interpretation of "constitutional principles rather than ... the practice of politics. ... [the lawyers only rarely] considered the political tasks proper to an autonomous nation or the immediate responsibilities of an equal partner, *both to itself*(my emphasis) and to its associates." Hasluck observes that Evatt himself had written a "learned paper" on the subject of notional

Dominion (i.e. alliance) status from a legal rather than a political point of view: there was more concern about Binding Obligation than enduring interest. Palmerston would have laughed at them; Washington, have berated their servility; Adams, been appalled by their simplicity. As Hasluck observed, " Dominion (national) status is to be found not in a declaration of rights but in [autonomous action taken] in exercise of those rights."<sup>1</sup>

Australia stuck to its "characteristic tendency to avoid definitions and to do what was [domestically] politically advantageous".<sup>2</sup> This was a polite way of saying that Australia held little dear - it would compromise on demand to satisfy the wishes of others, eventually, in the services of the nation's

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...Continued...

autonomy (in this instance, as related to British Dominions after the Statute of Westminster) and made a distinction between having the right to autonomous power and the "actual exercise of that power". It seems that what he was arguing was that failure by the Tributary to exercise to the full the complete autonomy bestowed by the Statute meant that the Suzerain held real responsibility to perform such functions as the tributary neglected. This was a powerful (and wholly spurious) argument for blaming all but oneself for every failing or neglect of national policy - especially foreign and defence policy. Evatt professed, as noted earlier, "profound love" for the U.K.; presumably love of British Justice; but perhaps also love of ultimate irresponsibility "under the law". It is no wonder then, that as events wrenched the scales from his eyes, he over-compensated; nor that he was so truculent toward those whom he considered had failed in respect of their 'legal' obligation. He probably also had an attack of Courtroom syndrome, thinking that mere words, well chosen and trenchantly pronounced, would sway the opinion of the great powers; but in the end it was only deeds and effective counter-pressure that could force them from their own preferred courses. He was an astonishingly naive man, in my view.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.



only universally held belief: White Australia. It could be said too that Australia carried over from its alienating experiences with the British Empire the same attitudes towards its relationship with the world's new great power - a mixture of abject dependency combined with overt resentment of the fact that patrons displayed a rather less well-developed sense of noblesse oblige than their clients thought they should. At least some of the realities of the situation began to penetrate the consciousness of the Australian and New Zealand political establishments, as evidenced in their decision to unilaterally announce the formation of an "ANZAC Pact" in early 1944. It provoked a storm of derision and righteous protest in both London and Washington, and not only because the wording lacked finesse.

**The ANZAC Pact:  
By Frustration, out of Delusion**

The idea for an Australian-New Zealand agreement on regional security may have begun to germinate in the minds of the Australian government in the crisis of the early months of the Pacific War, during the arguments over boundaries of operational areas and on the need for a Pacific Council. It was probably fertilised by Evatt's rather shocked realisation in late May 1942 that neither he nor Curtin knew that Roosevelt and Churchill had already agreed five months before that regardless of Japan's entry into the war, their strategy was to "beat Hitler first".<sup>1</sup> Australia had been neither consulted (this always the most grievous sin - the opportunity to sound important was not lightly

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1.DAFP vol.V, p788.



foregone) nor even informed; and subsequent public statements alluding to that strategy had been followed by disclaimers and evasion. Evatt was enraged by this duplicity; he probably expected it of the British, but clearly was deeply wounded by the secrecy of the US government. Even his good mate Frankfurter had said nothing. He was also downcast by the obvious intent of the major powers to use Australia as little more than a granary, barracks and stores dump in the future prosecution of the war, and could see the inevitable result. No glory, no influence. And at the same time as his discovery of Anglo-American perfidy, he was informed from Washington that it was "American policy [to place] American personnel in American aircraft".<sup>1</sup>

This struck right to the heart of any illusion of Australia emerging as an "equal partner" in the South Pacific; its ground and naval forces would remain dependent throughout on American air support: which meant that Australian war plans, even local ones, would remain subordinate to the desires and directions of Washington. Insult was added to injury when Churchill announced

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1. Ibid, p800.

the "magnificent gesture"<sup>1</sup> of sending one RAF fighter squadron to Australia, and "releasing" from the Middle East two squadrons of the RAAF.

MacArthur now chimed in to tell Curtin that "the strength necessary for the security of Australia as a base exceeds our maximum potential". This was not quite true, but the distraught Curtin swallowed it whole. Australia, if relieved of the burden of board and lodging for a swelling number of still largely useless American troops, and of the continuing foolish commitment of thousands of aircrew to Churchill's costly and unproductive bomber 'offensive', could more than defend itself - given modern equipment for its Air forces especially, and the assistance at one remove already given by the US Navy. But MacArthur, having already taken what his colleague Joseph Stilwell would have described as a "hell of a licking" had no mind to find out why - he wanted only to "return." This meant offensive action; and this meant more forces. And not Australian ones.

Whatever factual inaccuracy MacArthur might have been given to in service of his own ambition, he still gave Curtin a crisply

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1. Ibid, p806. Curtin used this phrase at Evatt's urging (while Evatt was in London. Bruce privately lamented (pp802-5 & pp811-6) that Evatt, too, had been 'got at' by Churchill and the trappings of influence). Curtin would have done much better to tell Churchill just what he could do with Pommy pilots, and demand the return of the rest of his own; as suggested by MacArthur. Part of the problem at least, for Curtin, was that Bruce was not telling him what he truly thought of Evatt's performance - and seduction (see p833). Bruce came from the 'other side' of politics, and presumably thought he would be sacked if too frank about Curtin's colleague. But Evatt was more tolerated than liked even in his own party, and might well have gotten reprimanded himself.

accurate, largely dispassionate appreciation of where Australia stood in relation to the United States and the other great powers.<sup>1</sup>

The United States, said MacArthur, had "no sovereign interest in the integrity of Australia. Its interest was from the strategical aspect of the utility of Australia as a base." It was not, as was Britain, bound by any tie of "blood, sentiment [or] allegiance to the crown". Americans might be "animated by a warm friendship" for Australia, but the strategic interest in it as useful base from which to strike the Japanese was conceived "irrespective of the American relationship" to whoever "might be occupying Australia." And he pointed out that Evatt's constant hectoring of Churchill had been the efforts "of a great pleader" but that the beat Hitler first strategy was "a high hurdle to get over". He rightly poured scorn on Churchill's "magnificent gesture"; it represented the return of one sixth of the RAAF fighter squadrons abroad. And he observed that the 9th Division was still in Syria.

The return of Australia's forces overseas was not a favour, as Churchill constantly implied or even stated outright. Australia's obligation was to itself; it should insist on its right to have all its forces back. How strange that an Australian Prime Minister should need to be told this by an American general. It was sound advice nonetheless. Three weeks later, Churchill went back on his own word and held the fighter

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1. Ibid, pp818-823.

Squadrons in the Middle East; Rommel was again (as usual) scaring the wits out of the Empire's greatest Generals ("I wish de Gaulle were C.I.G.S.", wrote Cadogan), and panicking the King's First Minister. The 9th Division went not to Australia but to the front being clung to 60 miles from Cairo. So much for blood ties and common loyalties; and for national sovereign rights.

The strategic absurdity continued, with the 9th still committed in the Middle East long after the crisis had passed. Curtin protested regularly (starting in July) and in vain; Churchill evidently thought he could wait him out and exhaust him by continued evasion, and threats of long-term British (and American) resentment. He was aided once again by the American President, who said could he could "appreciate [Curtin's] anxiety concerning the absence of forces in the Middle East", but it would (yet again) be possible to send an American division from Hawaii, although then again it might be employed somewhere else "of greater advantage to the defence of Australia." Roosevelt assumed that this offer "will obviate the necessity for ... [recall of the] 9th Division" back to Australia: "I cannot too strongly stress that leaving the 9th Division in the Middle East will best serve our common cause".<sup>1</sup> Only a month before, Roosevelt was pleading lack of shipping (as usual) as the reason why "it is not possible to move additional troops to Australia now or in the immediate future."<sup>2</sup>

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1. DAFP vol.VII, pp140-1.

2. Ibid, pp102-4.



How quickly things could change, though Churchill's petulant obstruction continued: now he pleaded lack of shipping; due he said, lying barefaced once more, to the need to continue the "Trans-Atlantic buildup for the invasion of the Continent" (twenty months later!). No one suggested sending more American troops to North Africa in the interests of beating Hitler first. Curtin, by now accustomed to Churchill's mendacious pleading, and perhaps now alert to Roosevelt's ulterior political motives, besides having his own public to consider, was unmoved. Eventually, Roosevelt acquiesced (with an uncharacteristically Churchillian lack of grace), and Australia got its men back - in February 1943, nearly eight months after they first had been asked for.

### **Relegation**

By the end of 1943, Australia's role in the war was already very much that of a relegated second stringer, increasingly required only to provide cannon fodder for the Royal Air Force (and to a lesser extent the Royal Navy), garrison troops in the Pacific, and common fodder for the American forces in SWPA. Much earlier than that, MacArthur had sought and got Lt-Gen Walter Kreuger to come out with the staff of what was to be the US Sixth Army; signaling the intent to diminish the role of Australian troops in his future plans. It was clear that this lack of front line participation by the Army, the virtual absorption of Australian Air and Naval units into the "allied" forces in SWPA and elsewhere (where they were given almost no public

acknowledgement, as had been the case with the Army's considerable achievements in PNG) would severely limit Australia's claim to an effective voice in the peace councils at war's end, and thus in determining the post-war order in the Pacific.

The major allies increasingly avoided even the pretence of consultation with Australia, which having been 'saved' from Japan by the Grace of God, Roosevelt and MacArthur (and they would have

to argue amongst themselves as to order of merit) was expected to show the appropriate humility to the masters of its destiny.

### **Winding Down**

Australia's efforts to overcome its marginalisation centred mainly upon establishing itself as Britain's chief partner and subcontractor in the Far East, and in attempting to prevent the nascent United Nations from becoming a body that would simply impose 'big power' solutions to world problems. Neither did much for its relations with the United States, whose patronage Australia also continued to court, though with less ardour than in the years of crisis. The last couple of years of the war were noteworthy for the increasing effort made by Australia to "bring in" British forces for the finale of the Pacific War; reunited under the Union Jack, it seems Australia's leaders believed, they would show the Americans that they, too, counted for something in the world. Politicians and generals alike were attracted too by the notion of Australian servicemen finally commanding expanded 'Empire' forces.

What Evatt, his government and the generals had failed to realise was that reference to past effort, however meritorious, on behalf of others or even for oneself, had virtually no effect on the deliberations of those plotting the future - for which even Britain, let alone Australia had little to offer in terms of real power.

As noted earlier, Evatt's performance, attitudes and language were in many ways forerunners of the style of international politicking adopted by the more prominent members of the Third World<sup>1</sup> during the postwar rush to decolonisation and assertive nationalism on the part of newly liberated colonies. But Australia itself had no such powerful incentive as decolonisation to push it off the path of dull certitude into adventurous experiment; although a rudimentary analysis would have shown it had a lot more intrinsic strength than many who did attempt such a course.

Australia's problem was not so much the effect of Evatt's hectoring but that it would not assert its nationalism to a sufficient degree by matching words with deeds. And in trying simply to play off two great powers against each other in an attempt to improve its own position in and influence over their policies, it overlooked the fact that it was little more to either than a moderately conveniently located piece of real estate, and useful place for Britain to deposit its excess unemployed.<sup>2</sup> Australia's inability to stress its difference from -----

1. During the 1945 San Francisco Conference, Cadogan (Diaries, p745) wrote that he thought Evatt "the most frightful man in the world; he makes long and tiresome speeches on every conceivable subject, always advocating the wrong thing and generally with a view to being inconvenient and offensive to us, and boosting himself. However, everyone by now hates Evatt so much that his stock has gone down and he matters less."

2. As in 1917, the British enquired in 1944 if Australia would be prepared as before to take "demobilised service personnel" post-war; "we are under considerable pressure here ... for a declaration of our policy" again in recognition of economic reality. DAFP, vol.VII, p231.



the principal western allies -in fact its insistence on its sameness to alternately Britain or the US (depending upon what it was trying to wheedle out of whom) cut little ice with either partner of the Atlantic "special relationship". There was not going to be a contest between these two for Australia's affections - its strident racialism put it "in the bag" anyway, so far as being a part of "the West" was concerned; and there was no chance that it would fall into the clutches of the world conspiracy of godless communism. Australia did not need to be "wooed" into alignment with the west - it was desperate for it. The main thing was to prevent any hot-headed Australians with minds of their own from upsetting the international apple cart by failing to concur and participate in the grand design being laid out in Washington and to a lesser extent in the capitals of western Europe. Australia would be dependable because it was dependent - still a colony.

#### **Eine Kleine Schmaltzmusik**

This reality was made clear by the turbulent Evatt in an extraordinarily (and unnaturally) smarmy paeon of praise to Australia's "saviours", which he delivered in early 1945. After opening up with a few evasions of fact ( such as Australia's supposed calm acceptance of the 'beat Hitler first' strategy) and a few exaggerations (Australia's navy, he said, had suffered losses "proportionally greater than those of any other nation" - which glossed over its inconsequential strength in major warships), Evatt ladled out the syrup to his American audience in

a fashion that must have amazed those at the State department who had anything to do with him up till then<sup>1</sup>. He assured them that:

"... seldom if ever has history evidenced a better example of military cooperation between a greater power and a lesser one than that between Australia and the United States forces in the area of the South-West Pacific. That spirit of comradeship and cooperation will go on to the end. The whole of our Pacific forces have been assigned to General MacArthur's command under the directive [agreed to with the United States], and they are used as and when and where it is most advantageous to the common cause."<sup>2</sup>

This was in backwaters. There was no employment of large-scale Australian forces in the invasion of the Philippines or the subsequent campaign to retake the group. By early 1944 MacArthur seemed to have overcome at least some of his earlier disdain for the fighting qualities of his erstwhile allies. In March, he told Curtin that he (MacArthur) "contemplated" that the "spearhead of his advance to the Philippines" would be three Australian divisions and an American paratroop division.<sup>3</sup> Soon afterward, politics seems to have intervened. An integrated Australian Corps under national command could not now take part. MacArthur now decreed that Australian divisions fight separately under American corps commands, or not take part at all. Australia wanted to field (and had ready) a full army corps for operations in Leyte  
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1. Cordell Hull ( himself hardly Roosevelt's right-hand man on foreign policy, despite being nominal Secretary of State, but good enough for Australian Prime Ministers to meet with) told Curtin in 1944 that "we frankly do not appreciate the attitude of Dr Evatt on this - the ANZAC Pact - and other matters." See Barclay, Friends in High Places, pp17-18.

2. Harper, p162.

3. DAFP vol.VII, p174.

and afterwards; but under its own national commander. He fully appreciated the anxiety of Australia's military leaders in particular that their men should not be committed and chewed up piecemeal, the way they so often had when fighting for the British in both world wars; and therefore must have anticipated that his demand to split the available Australian forces could not be accepted.

Although the Corps would clearly have come under the overall operational command of the American invasion force commander, with no objection from Australia, MacArthur could not agree to this alone.<sup>1</sup> It was do as I say or stay out of it. It may have been solely his decision, but it seems likely that Washington had more than a small part to play. As the First Secretary reported from Washington at the end of February 1944, it was essential to distinguish between "the attitude of Americans as a whole toward Australia and the attitude of the American Administration." The public, despite increasing newspaper criticism which could provide "a background which could probably be developed to Australia's disadvantage" in official or influential press circles, remained generally well-

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1. He used the familiar excuse of shipping, in the end; not enough to transport all the Australians together. So he shipped an American army corps all the way from Hawaii, and later shipped it back. Blamey's ADC, Norman Carlyon (whose book is one of the least hagiographic, but fair, accounts I have ever read from a person in such a position) says that Sutherland told Blamey outright "at a conference at the Brisbane GHQ" (no date given) that "it was impossible for political reasons to use Australian troops in the Philippines." See: Carlyon, I Remember Blamey. pp136-7.

disposed toward Australia. But the Administration's attitude was a "different thing altogether".<sup>1</sup>

Nelson Johnson, the US Minister to Australia, had it seems a fairly low opinion of his hosts, and especially of their noisy Foreign Minister. The President himself was aggravated by Evatt's ham-fisted style of indiscreet 'diplomacy'. The Far East Affairs section of the State Department wanted nothing to do with the minor league. And some of the press was scathing indeed. A significant section of US public opinion seemed to have come to the view, fuelled by the MacArthur publicity machine, and by influential sections of the press and officialdom, that in the Pacific as elsewhere America by its efforts had earned the right to become dictatress of the world's post-war fate. It was a vision of a post-war pax Americana that would depend upon the creation of an American global imperium, founded in and enforced by a worldwide distribution of American forces, based in locations of their choice. According to the Chicago Daily Tribune, which was controlled by the Secretary of the Navy Colonel Frank Knox, the United States would

need more than bases around Northern Australia, New Guinea and ... in New Caledonia. She will also require bases in the Philippines, Formosa or the China coast, the Kuriles, Marshalls and Carolines in order to properly contain Japan.<sup>2</sup>

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1. DAFP vol.VII, pp133-8.

2. Barclay & Siracusa, pp18-19.



Australia had no particular objection to this prescription, although traditional distrust of American expansion and fear of the potentially suffocating power of American economic-industrial capacity caused renewed effort to be made to prop up the British position and expand British participation in the Pacific war, as a means of providing a counterweight to American hegemonic tendencies.

The past was catching up to Australia, at least in the view of Colonel Knox's self-righteous correspondent:

When General MacArthur took command the Australians were scarcely even trying to keep New Guinea. General MacArthur recovered it ... without our efforts [Australia] probably would be a Japanese possession. The American nation saved the Australians from the Japanese cut-throats.<sup>1</sup>

These intemperate and rabidly inaccurate comments were reported in the Melbourne Herald, no doubt to the considerable chagrin of its readers and their relatives in the Australian armed forces which, in addition to their achievements in the two years prior to American entry into the war, had been the first white troops to inflict even local tactical defeats on the Japanese on land, and which had done the bulk of the effective ground fighting in New Guinea. As the *Herald* observed:

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1. Ibid. The authors give the date of the article as 2 March 1943. This is clearly a misprint, given the reference to the ANZAC Pact, which only surfaced in December 1943. I presume the correct date is 2 March 1944.

...the Tribune's leader might be discounted as [typical Anglophobia (inadvertently revealing the Herald's view of Australian autonomy)] ... but the fact that Colonel Knox's own paper adopts [this] line indicates the growing unanimity in America on the question of achieving security. America, in fact, *in determining as Russia to push her frontiers forward, advances much the same reasoning [as Russia] in support of her policies(my emphasis).*"<sup>1</sup>

With regard to Australia's desires for a say in the shaping and the administration of the postwar order in the South Pacific and the 'rampart' to the north, the Herald noted "the Administration's studied silence concerning the [ANZAC] Pact", and that it had "not rejected Mr Curtin's proposal for a Pacific Conference but has simply ignored it." America would act in its own time, as it saw fit - others were to comply. Australia could talk all it liked, but it had not the power or influence to get results it desired if America decided otherwise. In this, the United States was supported in the spirit if not the letter by Great Britain, whose great power amour propre was much offended by the presumptuous unilateralism of the south sea Dominions when together they agreed to define a "regional zone of defence ... based on Australia and New Zealand, stretching through he arc of islands north and northwest of Australia, to Western Samoa and -----

1. This is an interesting comment, revealing the truth of many smaller "aligned" powers view of the behaviour of the two future 'superpowers'. Had it not been for the strength of British sentiment, still, and the egregious burden of "White Australia", there would have been a very good case for Australia's becoming non-aligned after the war. There was anyway, since to all practical purpose that had been the position of South Africa and Canada before the war, and pretty well has been for much of the period after it - albeit in very different circumstances.

the Cook Islands", and advocated an international conference be held involving all "governments with existing territorial interests" in that region. The conference was to be called (and Evatt probably hoped, chaired) by Australia .

Although in January 1944 Roosevelt had invited Curtin to Washington<sup>1</sup>, assuring him that he was keen to talk (now he had finished dealing with the major league at Cairo and Teheran), and that "Australia is pulling her weight in the boat", the State Department was "frankly disturbed" at the proposal for an "early" discussion of "regional security and related matters"<sup>2</sup>. America hadn't initiated it seemed to be the substance of the complaint, even though the various "Bigs" (three, four or whatever) had no difficulty themselves sitting down to determine the fates of millions over dinner. They clearly wished to avoid having to discuss with France and the Netherlands the question of the status of colonies postwar, too, to avoid "bring[ing] into focus

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1. Curtin got to have lunch with Roosevelt and that, it seems, was that. About the only thing that came of the meeting, according to a sketchy record of conversation by Roosevelt's naval aide, was that Curtin agreed with Roosevelt that the ANZAC Pact was all Evatt's fault, done in a fit of "excess ... enthusiasm". In response to which Roosevelt magnanimously (patronisingly) "direct[ed] that the record show [sounds like some silly courtroom soap opera!] that his present opinion is that it will be best for us to forget the whole incident." Curtin fell for it; in the end, despite his ability to be strong 'on the wire', he could not handle confrontation face to face. The logical thing to do was stick to his guns, admitting only perhaps that some aspects might be susceptible to further review. So he was content to resile and then receive his pat on the head. But he moaned about it later to Churchill (of all people!). See DAFP, vol.VII, pp247-8 and 262-4.

2.DAFP, vol.VII, pp101-3.

conflicting opinions on matters which do not require decision at this time." The little folk could wait; Curtin could talk in Washington, and that would be plenty, thank you.<sup>1</sup>

Britain regarded the ANZAC Pact as regrettable but not punishable *lese majeste*; nothing to be taken seriously, simply yet another attempt by the minor league to have a say "in all major international decisions on an equal plane with the Great Powers." The plain (diplomatically, rather arbitrary) language of the ANZAC Pact came across as unseemly arrogance, even "megalomania" from a small nation which had yet to learn that even this rudimentary attempt at power politics was, given that it had no real power, just another example of Australia's penchant to play "music without instruments." Under the stewardship of the trenchantly abrasive Evatt, Australia's diplomatic orchestra was all too often a cacophony, which left its intended audience stone cold - though it clearly fulfilled some emotional need on the part of the players. The pattern would continue until the end of the war, and into the post-war years.

Australia reduced its army manpower (and its public standing in the United States; no doubt contributing to the sort of

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1. In his pre-visit briefing to Curtin, MacArthur once again provided some incisive wheat with the self-serving chaff. He noted that Roosevelt tended to flit all over the place during discussion, interlarding reference to the "essential questions, in order to obtain expressions of agreement. This method frequently took [people] unawares ... Having secured [apparent] agreement to what he wanted, the President instantly sought to nail people to their answers." - DAFP, vol.VII, p175.



twaddle being pushed by Knox's newspaper)<sup>1</sup> to meet the burgeoning demands being made on the domestic economy by the US forces. Curtin was alive to the danger, but hamstrung by both traditional loyalty and present reality when it came to formulating a policy response; he could only urge Churchill to 'get a move on' with sending more British naval forces to the Pacific. In August he cabled the man who had done so much to enforce Australian subservience to the political needs of its "friends", asking for help out of the predicament by appealing to British self-interest, and repainting himself as a loyal son of empire:

You will recall my discussions regarding the importance to the British Empire of flying the Union Jack in the impending operations in the Pacific and [for] a British Naval Force [taking part under SWPA command] in the Philippines attack. ...

There is developing in America a hope that they will be able to say that they won the Pacific war by themselves, even though they seek the maximum aid hoping to keep the publicity regarding the British forces limited.

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1. A diplomatic report from Washington stated: "original reaction from American press this morning which carried Army Minister Forde's announcement was very adverse and there is no doubt this will be [against us in other areas]. We realise, of course, that these reductions are entirely due to the necessity of getting more manpower onto the food production front to feed the US Army in [SWPA]. [But] the explanation never quite catches up to the original statement." (On 10 April the Washington Post noted that the report had shocked senators on the Military Committee. As usual, it was a bit late by then.) American pique at the ANZAC Pact, the report said, was also hampering procurement efforts. The Americans, as feared, were becoming as puerile as Churchill. See DAFP, vol.VII, p229.

The Prime Minister Continued:

I am deeply concerned at the position that would arise in our [!] Far East Empire if any considerable American opinion were to hold that America fought a war on principle in the far East and won it relatively unaided while the other allies, including ourselves, did little towards recovering our lost property.

I put this matter to you frankly as one of deep and far-reaching consequence to our [whose: Australia's or 'the Empire's'?] future role and prestige in the Pacific sphere.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing was (nor could be) done quick enough, and the Americans neither needed nor wanted the British around. Australia committed its still substantial frontline forces to militarily irrelevant moping-up campaigns in the Pacific Islands, and some equally pointless joint operations in Borneo. These may have been of some political value to Australia, but it was slight compared to the higher profile it might have had, both militarily and politically, especially in determining the postwar settlement with Japan, from having a substantial national force involved in the Philippines or elsewhere in the Northern Pacific.

And in the United States, concluding his ode to the joy of consensual relations, Evatt would implore of his audience:

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1.DAFP vol.VII, p479. Curtin had already raised the matter with Churchill, by telegram, in July 1944 (ibid., pp433-4), when the Americans' intent to go it alone, and designate themselves 'saviours of the world' was already very clear from the open press and from Embassy advice. Churchill's prime concern was Europe and the Atlantic; where another of the Empire's 'Greatest Generals' was making a cock of things yet again, and the Admiralty still was not confident that the threat to shipping had been overcome.

Why cannot similar cooperation and comradeship endure throughout the post-war period? ... [The] post-war problems which will confront our peoples will be most difficult to solve ... [but] they can hardly prove as difficult as [the situation] after Pearl Harbour when, for a long time, we had so little to meet the enemy's tremendous effort to establish his new economic empire in South-East Asia, in Indonesia, New Guinea and Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately for Evatt and Australia, he got just what he asked for: a similar style of cooperation that owed far more to the reality than to the fond illusion of what it meant to be a very small fish in the back corner of a very large pond. What he was saying, in effect, was: "we have completely subordinated our forces and our fate to your direction. Why don't you let us tell you what we want - so you can give it to us?" The longing for patronage was almost palpable. A new stage of the relationship had been reached - America now was identified as Australia's 'mate' in the Pacific. Washington didn't buy the beer.

#### **War's End - War's Beginning**

Despite the views of Frank Knox and others like him that the United States had "earned control" over just about the entire surface of the earth, the Truman administration had no special interest to mind in the South Pacific. Under the pressure of a breakneck demobilisation of its huge armed forces, and with

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1. H.V. Evatt, "Charter Address at the University of California", March 1945. In Harper, Australia and the United States, p162.

mounting domestic unrest at home\*, it quickly lost any enthusiasm it might have had to maintain any significant force in the region. Australian attempts to 'tie down' the US, and persuade it to retain the substantial wartime naval and air facilities built in the Admiralty Islands, were fruitless due to clumsy diplomacy from Australia and complete disinclination on the part of the United States<sup>1</sup>. Australian dependence upon the US for protection was a "given" so far as the US was concerned - and so therefore was Australian complaisance with whatever the US might feel inclined to do (or not) in Australia's area of interest. The South Pacific didn't count in the grand scheme of things; the United States had set out its "new frontier" in the northern Pacific, and had admirable outposts in the Philippines, the Marianas and in the whole of Japan and its former mandated territories. Australia's continued obeisance to Britain in many matters, and its opposition to both the veto power of the "big five" in the UN Security Council<sup>2</sup> and the autarchic reign of the US in Japan, both did little to help get Australia more firmly  
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\* One of the great American myths is that it was only its degenerate allies who suffered industrial problems and related civil unrest during and immediately after the war. But an elementary study will show that the US was riven by industrial disputation during this period, based on all the same kinds of reasons and emotions as prevailed in Australia, Britain and elsewhere. The problem as usual is most likely that servicemen abroad see what is happening in the host country and tell themselves that it "wouldn't happen at home" - it foes, but when they go home and denigrate the inferior antics they had witnessed, only rarely does someone at home point out that the same was happening there. thus do people preserve their false image of superiority over others.

1. Barclay, Chapter 2.

2. Barclay, pp21-22



into the American camp; or from the Australian view point, to get the US to overtly provide the sort of 'favourite son' treatment that it apparently expected was the natural outcome of an alliance with the US.

Once more, at the end of a war there was not a great deal of mutual regard between officials of either country; Australia distrusted American "imperialist sentiment" which it was felt was motivating American diplomacy rather than a genuine commitment to "internationalism"<sup>1</sup>. Many at all walks of life were glad to see the back of the Yanks at war's end. They deplored "the financial degradation to which too many Australians were willing to succumb" servicing the wants of the "ridiculously overpaid" and free-spending Americans. The relegation of "Australia's finest" fighting men to the backwaters of the Pacific war was also keenly felt. And so, to quote Henrietta Drake-Brockman, an astute observer of Australians and a noted chronicler of her times:

"the war drag[ed] on. The Yanks, no longer either saviours or objects of curiosity, are more tolerated than welcome. ...At the end of the Japanese war, the gradual withdrawal of the United States' forces [was] regarded with relief."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Barclay, p23. This sentiment expressed by Australian diplomat Sir Frederick Eggleston, who had been Australian ambassador to Chungking for most of the war. He had seen enough of American romanticism and their illogical twists and turns to distrust them totally it seems. And his views on many matters had over time proven eminently sane. So his view on this would have been respected and probably acted upon.

2. Quoted in Crowley, vol.2, p108.

This was no exaggeration, even though the remarkable penetration of Australia by American popular culture in the succeeding decades, and the continued leaning towards America and away from Britain, might seem to show otherwise.\* But the point was that many Australians saw America as a substitute in either or both their affections and their dislikes for Great Britain. Perhaps for many it had been seen more as being simply in *locum tenens*. The "pro-Empire, anti-English condescension" attitudes of Australians transferred easily to America in the imperial role. It did not help that Australia continued to adhere to its hopeless "White Australia Policy", and that much of the postwar migrant influx came from a decaying Britain that it seemed had lost all hope and whose glory was all in the past. Far too many of these people thought it more important to restore to Britain some of her former importance in the world, and central position in the Australian constellation, than to carve a new and distinctive identity for a new land in a "galaxy far, far away", But the pre-war status quo was inexorably and irremediably changing at a pace that left the limited imagination of white, "British" Australia hobbling along behind.

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\* The clamour for 'local content rules' on Australian television for instance, owed rather less to the closed-shop proclivity of Actors' Equity than to the popular weariness with the networks' habit of pumping them full of cheaply bought American "family" programmes and "sitcoms". By 1958, *The Current Affairs Bulletin* would observe that "all the TV (sic) stations are asking for Australian scripts... TV is becoming an important source of culture. [But] Most of the culture it presents is not and is not likely to be Australian." See: Crowley, vol.2, pp369-70.

CHAPTER 5  
AN ILLUSORY MATESHIP: 1945 - 1972

It always seemed to me that the Australian concept of mateship entered into the Australian-American relationship in a way which caused certain difficulties.

The American ... does not quite understand the Australian expectation that mates will always put their loyalty to one another ahead of other relationships. The Australian, perhaps quite unconsciously expects to be given a priority position in American affections ... expressed in terms of military protection, [and] preferential arrangements in international trade ...

However much individual Americans may come to prefer [Australians] to their other friends and relatives, Washington policies are conducted with a certain cosmic impartiality. ... I often could not quite say the things that I felt my audience wanted to hear. <sup>1</sup>

Australian-US relations at the official level were tolerable but lacked warmth, and developed at an indifferent pace. Postwar policy of the Labor government under Chifley echoed that of the "new Jerusalem" tendencies of Atlee's Britain; strong emphasis on social welfare, fuelled by protected and preferably nationalised industries. This was, naturally, anathema to the US, although some socialist measures were undertaken by the Truman administration, including price controls and farm relief - and even the attempted temporary takeover of certain industries by

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1. Frank S. Hopkins, US Consul-General in Melbourne, 1960-3. In Harper, Australia and the United States, pp255-6.

the state. Prime Minister Chifley, a former engine driver, was a staunch anti-Communist who would eventually use troops as strike-breakers (as had been done during the war years as well) during the coal miners' strike of 1949. But he held a deep commitment to socialist principles, underpinned of course by that old bugaboo, state control of the means of production and distribution. His proposal to nationalise the nation's banks was probably the straw that broke the Labor camel's electoral back, and allowed the return of Menzies and his clique of do-nothing Anglophiles.

### **Frozen Out and Frozen In**

Although it had some success in improving the role of the world's minor powers in the United Nations conference in San Francisco in 1945<sup>1</sup>, Labor remained sceptical that the UN alone would prove an effective vehicle for maintenance of regional collective security from armed aggression<sup>2</sup>. These fears were

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1. Evatt's view of his achievements (he lists no less than 13 amendments and additions to the Charter, besides a few other matters he was involved in), and his disappointment at not preventing the Great Power veto in the Security Council, are recorded in his press release of 23 June 1945, as conveyed by cable to the Embassy in Washington. See: DAFP vol.VIII, pp230-2.

2. Stemming from its own disillusioned recognition of previously excessive belief in the efficacy of the League of Nations and later disarmament 'agreements'. But the same wish for an effective world body remains characteristic of Labor to this day. It is really rooted in its other age-old hostilities, toward 'merchants of death' (building profits on the corpses of 'the workers') and a general reluctance to spend money on defence, until an emergency has arisen that cannot be talked away. Hasluck is pretty objective about this in his Official History (given that he came most definitely from a more 'conservative-nationalist' background, and was one of the few outstanding men in Menzies' ministries), and I think his view of "The Standpoint of Labour" is as good an explanatory brief as one might find anywhere. The really fascinating thing is that the 'standpoint'



heightened by the increasingly dictatorial attitudes displayed by the US toward its "partners" in the "free world", and by intransigence shown by the USSR in the pursuit of its own interests in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. It was clear that Britain, despite its return to Southeast Asia and Hong Kong, was too enfeebled and dependent on American money to do much to offset the United States' ability to do much as it pleased anywhere in the world. Nor could Britain resume its role as Australia's military guarantor.

Indeed, Britain was struggling to retain at least sufficient of the illusion of power to remain in the major league, and was less inclined than ever to represent or guarantee the interests of its weaker Commonwealth associates. In fact it expected them to devote themselves with redoubled fervour and material commitment to the task of restoring the image of power of the British Empire; long before an increasingly resentful America even thought of the term, Britain had already inaugurated as policy the concept of Imperial burden-sharing\*.

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was and is recognisably the wellspring of today's defence policy - so much for the "revolution" and "conceptual watersheds". See The Government and the People, 1939-41, pp20-30.

\* And in fact this was the gist of the inter-war Imperial Conferences, and the root of the whole idea of Imperial Defence. It was predicted on the same two options as the American Imperium: indivisibility or fragmentation. It was no more valid than Douhet's nonsense about the indivisibility of air power, nor the Mackinder-based notion of geo-political 'heartlands'. As the Chinese enduringly prove, an ethical -emotional- social base can be provided chiefly through the power of an Idea, regardless of location; but overseas Chinese are nonetheless loyal to the country they reside in, for all their allegiance to the ideal of

At the same time, the inability to persuade a rapidly contracting United States military establishment of the strategic importance of Oceania generally made it unlikely that any special favours or assistance would be forthcoming from across the Pacific. And the US, far from imposing upon Japan the harsh peace terms that Australia had desired, so as to throttle the pace of its eventual re-emergence as a major power, was setting about rebuilding the place and had even maintained on his throne the Emperor Hirohito, for many Australians the very essence of a rotten Japanese system.

Australia's favourite American, Douglas MacArthur, became the United States' pro-consul in Japan, and was as rudely dictatorial as ever. The Australian and other nations' representatives on the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ) were occasionally so incensed by US unilateralism in support of its "perimeter building" that they took sides with the Russians<sup>1</sup>, who by this time were already viewed as a new threat to the rest of the western world. <sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, Australia and the US did find some common ground in their approach to Indonesian independence.

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a China that was (is) the centre of the Universe.

1. Kazuo Kawai, Japan's American Interlude, p18.

2. Michael Schaller. The American Occupation of Japan, p63. The Australian representative, W. MacMahon Ball thought that US-Soviet rivalry, as fostered mainly by MacArthur's paranoid staff, "cast a shadow" over the ACJ. There were "no problems of Japan"; everything was "considered for its effect on Russian-American relations."

It was Evatt, after consultation with, inter alia, the U.S., who brought the Dutch-Indonesian dispute to the notice of the Security Council; and Australia was nominated, with no visible<sup>1</sup> qualms on the American part, as Indonesia's representative on the United Nations' Good Offices Committee. Nonetheless, not all Australians reacted with unalloyed joy to the sudden emergence of a populous Asian republic whose territory occupied much of the sacred northern "rampart"<sup>2</sup>. Australia was moved to do two things: firstly, to set out a coherent and moderately ambitious defence programme, in which naval and air forces would be substantially strengthened, while a small but useful standing army was to be maintained for the first time in the nation's history. Secondly,

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1. Though there were enough less visible ones. America had given up on de-colonisation in South-east Asia. The State Department thought "the Australian attitude [supporting Indonesian independence] is not helpful ... [it] serves to weaken the democratic [!] front, it has and will prove embarrassing to us." But by 1948 the US had done a '180', to accord with Australia's (and a more "naturally" American) position. Evatt got carried away again, and started on about a "special relationship with the American people" - shades of Churchill, whom he resembled more closely than either would have wished to acknowledge. See: Barclay, pp29-29.

2. Even though it was recognised as inevitable and, really, only fair. Even in December 1945, Australian W. MacMahon Ball had reported that despite the arguments of the British foreign office representatives to "impress me with the wisdom of the Foreign Office, based on so long an experience in handling the 'Eastern Mind', [of] the great advantages to Australia of the restoration of Dutch rule ... and the ... ephemeral nature of the Nationalist Movement...", the Dutch were bound to go. He was unimpressed with the Dutch leaders in the N.E.I.: "[they] display a muddling ineptitude in almost every enterprise they undertake. ... Their Dutch remedy is force and still more force to teach the "natives" a lesson." But "the real problem is not whether the Indonesians can govern themselves but whether they will allow the Dutch to govern." And this they clearly would not. See: DAFP vol.VIII, pp716-22. Document 458.



the government set about, with redoubled vigour, trying to secure a formal military security guarantee from the United States.

Its ability to do this was undermined not only by the sometimes schizophrenic manoeuvres of Evatt\* - still Foreign Minister until 1949 - but by Australia's equally schizophrenic outlook on international relations generally. It continued to strongly assert its right to be counted and listened to as an independent nation (an emergent regional power, it thought), even as it fell back into the British trap in a multitude of ways. Though it probably was satisfying to Australian egos to hold the chairmanship of the British Commonwealth delegation to the Allied Council for Japan, and the command of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (headquartered in Kure) this only helped submerge Australian identity back into the Imperial pastiche - it was still being the loyal servant of Empire. It continued, despite partial agreement to America's goals of free international trade, to remain in the sterling bloc (effectively having to beg to Britain for a quota of Dollar credits) and to give outrageous preference to British manufactures and motor

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\* Continuing the trend of Australian politicians to criticise from afar and go to water when confronted with the object of their pronouncements, Evatt decided after visiting Japan in 1947 that MacArthur in his new role was not such a bad guy after all. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Lovett wrote of Evatt that he had "great self-confidence and determination, is anxious to have a finger in every pie, is slow in giving his confidence, and insists on receiving full credit for his achievements." Curiously enough, this accurate portrait just about put a face to American diplomatic practice from 1941.



vehicles<sup>1</sup>, and financial and freight services, even though after the war these were even less competitive than before. It tied its defence forces to British equipment, and its nascent national industries suffered likewise. Worse, Australia found it congenial and convenient to continue protection of Australian industry at ridiculous levels in the name of job creation<sup>2</sup>, while making no real effort to export its products in deference to Britain, whose need was it seems presumed to be greater. Australia continued to depend heavily upon agricultural and raw material exports, and effectively sustained the economic imbalances and malpractices of the pre-war period with the aid of abominable industrial relations practices that seemed to be reinforced by the British-oriented "populate or perish" assisted immigration scheme. Together with a lack of Australian owned .pa shipping and financial service institutions, all this helped

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1. British motor vehicle imports were still getting preferential treatment in 1968; the import tariff for them was 35%, versus 45% for other "most favoured" nations' cars. Even with this kind of help they were virtually eliminated from the domestic market by 1973, when their local manufacturing and assembly plants also shut down. See: Crowley, vol.2, pp550-1.

2. There was an obsession, held in common by British and Australian Labour, with "full employment" policies. It was a main point of contention with the US during the war, when postwar policy was being formulated, and afterwards,. The strange thing is that Australia was easily more able than Britain to sustain a low rate of "structural unemployment" - the government was routinely taken to talks postwar when the unemployment exceeded 2-3%. Britain's "New Jerusalem" architects, in contrast, reckoned on a "structural unemployment" rate of around 8% - that is, full employment meant about 92% of the workforce (in essence, males from 15-65) in something like permanent employment. Australia's expectations in this respect were therefore even less realistic than those of its mentors.

produce a round of recurring balance of payments crises.<sup>1</sup>

The overall effect of all this was to, as usual, curtail defence spending and reduce Australia's forces again to token level. It seems that, despite appointment of some its best qualified and insightful people to the United States, none of them had realised - or at least had not convinced the government - that the cardinal principle followed by the US in its dealings with its "friends" was that the lord helps those who help themselves. The long postwar line of non-professional, political appointees sent to Australia as US Ambassadors, should have demonstrated even to those in the cocoon of Canberra that the US did not regard Australia as having any particular importance. Adding to its woes, the Americans, who seemed to believe they had just discovered pragmatism in diplomatic relations, criticised (rightly, nonetheless) Australia's excessively 'academic' approach to foreign relations, characterised by unrealistic appreciations of its position and by inflexible conduct of its relations with especially the US. The Labor government was also

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1. Which I think is the main reason for Menzies' long-standing resort to vote-buying welfare measures and "red scares" to keep himself in power. Import restrictions, of steadily increasing severity, were imposed in 1952, 1954, and 1955; all during the so-called "postwar boom", which came to a shuddering halt in 1957 after a severe drought reduced Australia's lifeblood - primary exports (still). Restrictions were lifted briefly in 1959, only to be reimposed, along with a severe curtailment of credit, the following year. "Except in 1954, reported the Sydney Morning Herald (17 November 1960), inflation has proceeded at a rapid rate ever since [1949]." Taxation had risen steadily, along with the size of government and of its "socialist" state-run enterprises, including the Commonwealth Bank (Chifley must have been rolling in his grave!). The pattern seemed to continue ad infinitum. See Crowley, vol.2.

considered to be "soft on Communism", rapidly becoming the ultimate expression of righteous American disdain.

The overall view, expressed by the US Charge d'Affairs in Canberra in 1948, was that the government and the people were saturated with a "complacent assumption that when [and if] the next war comes, the United States will [come and] bail them out just like it did last time."<sup>1</sup> Australia's relationship with the US was getting caught in a revolving door of mutually reinforcing, self-fulfilling prophecy. Dependency breeds disregard, which breeds insecurity. Insecurity breeds dependency. And yet any attempt to assert independence bred only hostility, and attempts to reinforce dependent status.

To the considerable relief of the State Department and the newly returned Truman administration, whose negative attitudes to Australia had undoubtedly been fuelled by some pretty ordinary Ambassadors, Labor was defeated in 1949 by the Menzies-led conservative coalition of the Liberal and Country parties. The US expected that this group would be less troublesome - "less ... demagogic and ... more reasonable and [sympathetic] to the United

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1. Barclay, p29.

States point of view."<sup>1</sup> This was not too far from the mark, but it overlooked a couple of things. First, that Menzies, although possessed of an almost unparalleled capacity for public groveling to great and powerful friends (his own infamous phraseology), had by now fallen complete victim to galloping anglophilia - he would willingly subordinate the interests of his own country, let alone those of the upstart United States, to those of mother England. Secondly, Australians as a whole remained mortally afraid of a resurgent Japan, and it was therefore an electoral necessity for any government to oppose an "easy" peace - unless it could produce an acceptable international quid pro quo, in the form of a formal military alliance one or both of the leading western powers.\* Menzies also had learned of the importance in domestic politics of what he called the "hip pocket nerve" - he aimed to stay in office by -----

1. See G.St.J. Barclay, op.cit., for a concise review of this immediate postwar period. The quality of US ambassadors was truly appalling. After the nonentity Butler came the positively malicious Cowen, who boasted that it was chiefly due to his efforts that Evatt was to be replaced as head of the UN General Assembly by Carlos Romulo of the Philippines. After him came a Alabama politician known in the US as "no friend of Labor", who asked Truman for the job because, having been voted out of office and having no marketable skills, apparently, "I really need to go on the payroll."

\* Perhaps, though, the strangest outcome of the change of government was that the United States proved that, regardless of the political colour of its own administration, and regardless of its ability to stomach 'leftist' governments in Europe, it could not abide them elsewhere. Australia was lumped in with "the rest" politically; any bunch of subservient right-wingers was preferable to any bunch of noisy left-wingers (even though in Australia at least this made not one jot of difference in practical terms - both were congenitally dependent on external support to overcome their chronic lack of self-confidence). Evatt had been trying just as hard as Spender to get an alliance of some kind with the USA.



keeping Australians fat, dumb and happy, introducing a measure of state welfare and protectionism that would have delighted (even, sometimes, outraged, as in the later instance of state aid to church schools) most of the left. He "bought out" his opponents, and the country paid for it twice, in solvency and in self-respect.<sup>1</sup>

However, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, though well steeped in the culture of dependency, was one of Menzies' most bitter political opponents, and more inclined to view Australia's relationship with Britain in terms of Australia's assuming the mantle of 'protecting power" in the South Pacific and the Southeast Asian colonies, than in terms of simply acting as a prop to a shaky and disintegrating empire. Menzies still held Britain to be the key to Australia's future status and prosperity - Percy Spender saw it in the United States, which he thought might show the requisite gratitude in economic and other areas, as well as in guarantees of military security in return for Australia's doing little more than giving a reassurance it was on the US' side. The problem was to persuade the United States that this was so, and neither Spender nor anyone else ever really did. How could they? Dependency created yet another conundrum; to justify it to the public, one had to be demonstrably weak. This

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1. One MP, learning that Spender was going to become Ambassador to Washington in mid-1951 (and thus leaving the Parliament), pleaded with him to stay: "You are the only hope, Percy" he wrote, "This country will be ruined by Bob [Menzies] and his spineless, gutless acting ...". How right he was. See Barclay, p54.

was easy enough for any Australian government to achieve. But on the other hand, to justify expected favour, one had to "show willing" for one's external guardian-patron; this not so easy in a condition of congenital weakness.<sup>1</sup>

Had it not been necessary for Australia to sign the Japanese Peace Treaty then being negotiated, and the added urgency given this matter by the outbreak of the Korean War, Spender would probably have gotten even less than what John Foster Dulles was eventually prepared to acquiesce to; and what he gave was virtually an echo of the supposed guarantees of the 1937 Imperial conference. Yet this insipid brew is what Australian governments have become addicted to over the last four decades.

#### **Salvation II - ANZUS**

As late as mid 1949, when the assured triumph in China of Mao Zedong's communists gave rise to something of a "global communist conspiracy" scare in Australia as well as in the United States and in Great Britain, Secretary of State Dean Acheson had categorically rejected the idea of a Pacific Pact for collective military security, based on the NATO model. NATO was enough for the United States, which did not contemplate entering into any further arrangements of this nature. NATO was the product of a  
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1. The corollary was, though, that so long as not much needed to be done, the patron liked its clients weak as well; it kept them controllable. The real difficulty arose when the patron himself felt weak or insecure, as had already been shown with Britain, and with the US in Korea. It was already complaining about being left to carry alone the burden which it had imposed upon itself.

special set of circumstances "peculiar to Europe and the Atlantic community - the logical culmination of a series of developments"<sup>1</sup> which included the Marshall plan, the extinction of popular government in Eastern Europe, and the Berlin Blockade. Numerous internal conflicts in Asia would also have to be resolved to provide even the basis for consideration of a security pact. Although several 'non-colonial' Asian nations had shown interest in the idea (Thailand, Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines), India was not among these, nor was Indonesia. Initial attempts by Australia and New Zealand to get both of them interested only increased US wariness of involvement in a pact it might not be able to dominate, especially as the emerging non-alignment stance of these nations made them potentially "unreliable". They could not be persuaded anyway.<sup>2</sup>

Australia then focussed its efforts on obtaining a tripartite pact, but at the same time US opinion was shifting toward a multilateral regional pact to contain communism. The US also wanted to re-arm Japan, which by now was regarded already as being potentially the key US ally in the Pacific, and whose release from the shackles of de-militarisation was now seen to be

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1. Statement by Acheson, 18 May 1949. Cited by Reese, p114. Acheson's remark on the need to wait for Asia's internal conflicts to subside was based upon a statement by Indian Prime Minister Nehru a few days earlier. But whereas Nehru was clearly saying that he did not want the Major Powers interfering in Asian affairs, Acheson's statement was slanted more to the view that the US had to remain free to choose its own time and place of involvement.

2. Reese, pp114-7.

essential to the war effort in Korea. Despite the view of Menzies and a majority of his government that " the United States should be well able to deal with the situation in Korea"<sup>1</sup> there clearly was a case<sup>2</sup> for Australia to make a significant commitment of forces in answer to the appeal of first the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and later of the UN Secretary General.<sup>3</sup> Spender, still working to secure a security pact with the United States (and in effect, therefore, against the wishes of his Prime Minister), was of course in favour of this, and it was logical from the "Imperialist" point of view as well for Australia to give material substance to its still token role of acting in *loco parentis* for Britain in East Asia. But the British, though extremely hard pressed financially and stretched thin across Europe and the still significant remnant of their Empire, much of which was now undergoing insurgencies and civil unrest, volunteered to send troops to Korea, pretty well for the same reason Spender wanted to send Australians - to curry US favour by 'doing their bit'.

True to type, they warned Australia against doing the same so that it would not strip itself of forces that Britain might  
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1. Barclay, p39.

2. On the basis of its vigorous support of the principle of collective security guaranteed by the United Nations. But Menzies' preference for Imperial Union (which out of deference to reality, he had soon to expand to 'Anglo-Saxon' union, as usual) led him to disdain the value of the UN, comprised of an increasing number of "unreliable" countries. As Reese observes (p147), Menzies was "personally unresponsive to ... the non-western world."

3. Ibid.



want to call upon to defend its interests in a "real emergency" in the Middle East, or to supplement its forces in Malaya.<sup>1</sup> The ridiculous illogic of the 1930s all over again. In the end, Australia committed just one Battalion initially, although the JCS felt it should be able to provide three.<sup>2</sup> And had it adhered to the 1947 defence plan, it would indeed have had a Brigade Group ready for deployment as required in support of United Nations action. As usual, the philosophical-rhetorical commitment of the Australian government (allowing that the government had changed, but this meant little in practical force-structure terms) was not matched by its material willingness<sup>3</sup>. The practical ineffectiveness of its widow's mite was masked to the Australian public by the promptness of Australia's commitment and by formation of a "Commonwealth Brigade"; being part of a larger collective was superficially more impressive (and may have helped explain the appeal to Menzies of his extravagant praise for the quasi-imperial British Commonwealth - it was another cheap way

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1. Ibid, p40.

2. Ibid, p42.

3. See Barclay, op.cit. It took some very broad hints from President Truman to get Menzies to confirm the forces originally 'volunteered' on his own initiative by Spender (Menzies was absent at the time). As Barclay observes (p41); "Menzies was ... concerned with Australia's role as an ally of the United Kingdom, rather than ... of the United States." And he was well aware of British dislike for the idea of an American-Australian 'special relationship'.

out). The forces in Korea<sup>1</sup> all performed very well; but it was a very small-scale contribution, even by comparison with some of the other 'secondary' participants. It was a scenario endlessly repeated, though the motivations for this were varied.

Truman's appointed negotiator for the Japanese peace treaty, John Foster Dulles, doubled as his special envoy to the regional nations. He believed that the US need not enter into any formal alliance, because it was inevitable (he said, like Churchill) that an attack on Australia, New Zealand or the Philippines would involve the US<sup>2</sup>. The former two had their doubts. Spender was at least credited with improving relations with the United States (to " a degree of cordiality unknown since the ... Pacific War"<sup>3</sup>), and this made Dulles willing to talk, if nothing else. In the end, Dulles was able to get what he wanted (Australian agreement to the Japan Peace Treaty) by giving away very little indeed; but still true to form, Australia chose to believe that it had gained a lot. Spender thought ANZUS his "crowning

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1. Eventually two Battalions, besides Australia's only aircraft carrier, a few destroyers or frigates, and a fighter squadron and supporting air force units. A full list of all nations' contributions (including offers not taken up) is given in: Max Hastings, The Korean War, London, Michael Joseph, 1987; Appendix.

2. This view had already been expressed to Spender by Secretary of State Acheson. See Barclay, p44.

3. Barclay, p50.

achievement" - he was easily pleased.<sup>1</sup> The British government, headed again in late 1951 by the arch-Imperialist Winston Churchill, was less than thrilled with ANZUS. Once again playing the role of *bete noir* to Australia's attempts to ease the British stranglehold on its affairs, Churchill resented Britain's exclusion from the pact - most likely because he hated the very thought of Britain's Dominions talking or acting with any other nation without going through Whitehall. He wanted to supplant it through a wider agreement, and so, still, did the US.

Even so, there was one matter where Australia's rush to embrace the US as a security guarantor led it away from following the very sensible policy of the British government (still under Atlee at the time) of recognising Mao's men as the *de facto* government of China. Australia would have been well served in this case by following suit. Strangely enough, Menzies was responsible for this, again in opposition to Spender, who proposed it - before the ANZUS Treaty had been formally agreed<sup>2</sup>. Menzies may not have much cared for the United States, but he was scared stiff of offending Washington, now riven with arguments over "who lost China?". And so Australia fell in with the fatuous policy of pretending that Stilwell's "peanut" retained the legal

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1. He had got almost nothing that he asked for, and in particular had failed to secure either a NATO-Style agreement that 'attack on one is an attack on all'; or an undertaking to establish permanent political-military consultative machinery and a combined military planning staff. For Spender's rather self-congratulatory account of the negotiations, see: Harper, pp163-170. The text of the treaty is also given.

2. Barclay, p51.

right to government of the mainland.

At home, Menzies was using fear of domestic communist influence to undermine both the internal cohesion and the public support of the Labour Party. His neo-McCarthyism<sup>1</sup>, and the rising troubles in Malaya and Indochina, made it expedient for he and his new Foreign Minister, Richard Casey, to proclaim a wider ambit for ANZUS; it was now directed mainly against the threat of a "much more pressing and immediate danger" in the form of communism. Casey and Menzies also pursued the idea of Australia playing a 'mediatory' role between, on the one hand, Britain and the US, and on the other, between these two and various emergent nations. It was fatally misconceived, if only because Menzies' biases<sup>2</sup>, and Australia's devotion to racial exclusivity, meant that Australia was incapable of either acting or being accepted as an "honest broker" in the developing world, and its dual dependency on both the US and Britain made a joke of its pretensions there. It became more shuttlecock than conduit; and even if it could advise, it could (or would) not act.

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1. Though it didn't need the post-war Red Menace to arouse it. Menzies in 1940 wanted a 'soft' peace deal done with Germany, which with Italy would have to recruited into "a new alignment of nations ... combined to resist Bolshevism." See: David Day, The Great Betrayal, pp42-3.

2. Menzies advised "people [who] venture into the field of foreign affairs" to "each night ... have a good, long, thoughtful look at the map and try to realise where we live and where our friends live." He obviously forgot to look at the distance scale; Casey at least was alert to the need to develop new friends in Asia, but even he was a victim of belief that "the survival and progress of our present civilisation depend substantially on the English-speaking peoples...". See: Reese, pp147-8.



Menzies' long-standing resort to the "Red Menace" also tacitly endorsed the wholly erroneous transposition of the European situation to the Pacific, something well under way now in the US. Little attempt was made to determine how Australia (Indonesia's champion) might best deal with a post-colonial Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, and the danger of communism in Malaya seems to have been seriously exaggerated, in that it would never get support from the bulk of the people; or indeed, from China. Australia's misconceived policy of denying recognition to China, and continuing to support its exclusion from the United Nations, derived in essence from the perceived necessity of toeing the US line on foreign policy toward all but the least significant of the world's nations. Another tragic blunder. Now the ideological jingoes cheered.

The US "obligation" to Australia was in any event less than clear<sup>1</sup>, and Dulles regarded it as being mainly for psychological comfort, while Australia sent its forces elsewhere if required. Between them, though for differing reasons, Menzies and Spender had made a reality of Sir Edward Hutton's dream of 1903 - Australia was providing an Imperial ready reaction force, and this apparently unknown to the public, which was encouraged to believe it had been given a cast-iron guarantee. The ANZUS Pact

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1. In print. Dulles testified in the Senate that there was "no question at all of the United States ever sending any troops to Australia or New Zealand ... [but] they have ... very top secret [obligations to Britain] .. to send their troops out to the Middle East (again!!) if there is serious trouble ... [and in all events] want to have some appearance at least of a shield around them at home of sea and air power." See Barclay, p53.

was in fact no more substantial than the woolly prevarications of the pre-war period.

The signatories were obliged to do no more than "consult" and "take action in accordance with their constitutional processes" in the event of an attack upon their metropolitan or island territories, or armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in "the Pacific Area" . No-one knew what this meant, and Australia spent a lot of effort over the next decade or more, trying to clarify and widen especially the definition of the "Pacific area".<sup>1</sup> But as Dulles had made clear (at home) the US was not buying. Article VIII of the Treaty implies that ANZUS was regarded as an interim arrangement "pending the development of a more comprehensive system of regional security in the Pacific Area"; and this certainly was Dulles' own view<sup>2</sup>. During this period its Council, which was no more than the Foreign Ministers meeting ad hoc, was "authorised to maintain a consultative relationship" with other regional associations and organisations which might be of use to "further the purposes of the treaty." Individual nations would do this anyway in the process of  
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1. Spender flattered himself that this was clever; he had proposed this loose definition in order not to limit the scope (as he saw it) of US commitment to situations which might be deemed dangerous to Australia. See: Harper, p170. Spender paid rather less attention to the possibility that any attack on an American ship or aircraft might mean that the US would call upon Australia to 'pitch in' in accordance with its "obligations".

2. In the Department of State Bulletin of 23 July 1951, he wrote: "this [draft treaty] is one of a series of arrangements ... now being worked out by the United States to strengthen the fabric of peace in the Pacific." It was only one of number of "initial steps" to the development of the "more comprehensive system of regional security". See: Barclay and Siracusa, pp28-9.

developing and tending their regional relationships - thus article VIII seems to have been inserted more as a signal to the Junior Partners that Anzus was expected to have a finite, possibly quite brief, existence. However the signing of the Manila Pact in 1954 did not put an end to ANZUS, as might perhaps have been expected. Trevor Reese<sup>1</sup> suggests that this was because it was already seen as more manageable due to its smaller membership; the complaisance and 'Anglo-Saxon' identity of its junior partners no doubt helped as well.

As the French position in Indochina continued to crumble, President Eisenhower and his globe-trotting evangelist Dulles found renewed interest in the idea of a regional security alliance in Southeast Asia. Eisenhower, despite his view that the defeat of communism was not necessarily synonymous with "always blocking national aspirations and supporting the status quo", was apparently persuaded by the Joint Chiefs and Dulles that the actions of the Viet Minh were directed by the "Chinese Communists ... apparent desire to extend [their] political system ... to South East Asia."<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower now believed that a communist victory in Indochina would threaten the whole of the US' Asian flank, from Japan to (non-aligned) Indonesia, and he gave birth to the now-infamous Domino theory to explain why proximity to a communist led nation in Asia was more or less the -----

1. Australia, New Zealand and the United States, p181.

2. Leonard Mosley, Dulles, New York, The Dial Press/James Wade, 1978, p355. Quoting Dulles' responses to questions at a press conference.

same as shaking hands with Typhoid Annie. Why this was not so in Europe was not explored. At any rate, the message now preached by the US "was tantamount to saying that victory in Indochina was vital to American national security, and that the allies of the United States should be prepared to respond accordingly."<sup>1</sup> Few were. Australia saw little virtue in intervening in such a manner that might induce a similar Chinese reaction as in Korea, and thus make matters worse. The Chinese themselves, seemed to be 'settling down', and Ho Chi Minh could probably be accommodated. On 7 April 1954, Casey told the House that:

Mr Dulles' statement [of 29 March] clearly implies United States readiness to participate in joint action to secure South-East Asia. He has warned the Vietminh that they can no longer base their hopes on a defeat of French forces or even a withdrawal of French forces. ...

It is obvious, however, that the line of thought put forward by Mr Dulles needs further elaboration and exploration before any new statement of Australian policy can be made on this point.<sup>2</sup>

Australia wanted to see what would come of the talks in Geneva. Nothing could have been more calculated to send the Chinese back into their imperialist-baiting shell than Dulles' amazingly boorish conduct at the start of the Geneva Peace talks on 26 April 1954, and reason seemed to flee out the door along with any regard held for the United States by a visibly

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1. Barclay, op.cit., p65.

2. In Barclay & Siracusa, pp38-9.



embarrassed and insulted Zhou En-lai.<sup>1</sup> Australian Foreign Minister Casey thought the whole US position that was emerging toward China and Vietnam was unsound and inadvisable<sup>2</sup>, but at the same time he had to contend with the need to stay on the right side of the Americans, and make some obeisance to the electoral tactics of his boss, who liked to call general elections whenever he could whip a Red Scare into being to exploit the now-permanent split in the Labour Party. After the talks, Casey used the excuse of the impending Federal election to beg off making any commitment to any proposed action in Indochina. Somehow, despite Dulles' earlier strong-arm tactics, Casey's excuse was accepted and the full wrath of Dulles and his President was turned upon the "woeful unawareness" of the British to the looming red menace.<sup>3</sup> Australian concern mounted at the increasingly evident friction between its two protectors.

However, Australia was also not achieving much in its self-appointed role as mediator between the now sharply divergent world-views held by the US administration and Great Britain, whose foreign Secretary (and later Prime Minister) Anthony Eden  
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1. Mosely, pp 360-1.

2. Casey wrote in his diary in April 1954 (no date given), that : "A prominent Frenchman said to me a year ago that there was no military solution to Indo-China's problem but that the only solution was a political one. This visit to Saigon has renewed this statement in my mind and I tend to believe it is largely true. ... There seems to be little doubt that the majority of Vietnamese tend to be pro-Vietminh when they have any political views one way or the other." See: Graham Freudenberg, "The Australian Labor Party and Vietnam", Australian Outlook, August 1979, vol.33 no.2.

3. Barclay, pp67-8.

was cordially detested by both Eisenhower and Dulles. This 'duty' was imposed largely by the Australian conservative political establishment's continued belief that Britain should not threaten its slender grasp on 'great power' influence by repeated confrontation with the United States - which of course would threaten the other cherished notion of a worldwide Anglo-Saxon alliance extending into perpetuity. But "there was not the slightest evidence that anything Australia did or said had any influence whatever on British or American policy."<sup>1</sup>

A good deal of its lack of weight with America at least stemmed from Menzies absolute lack of commitment to anything but buying votes at home and maintaining through his devotion to the crown his self-image as an international statesman. Australian defence spending now stood at 3.9% of GNP in 1953-4 (already down from a fairly miserly 5.2%<sup>2</sup> at the time of the Korean Armistice), and its contributions to the Colombo Plan aid scheme the lowest per-capita, by far, of any of the major donor nations.<sup>3</sup>

Thus when the time came for discussions on the nature of the Manila Pact that was signed in September 1954, Australia found it was signing something that imposed obligations while  
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1. Barclay, p69. A view strongly supported by Trevor Reese, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, 1941-68. pp146-49.

2. It should be borne in mind that this was in time of, supposedly, war of vital interest to national survival. Compared with 38.5% of GDP in the crisis year of 1942-3 (up from 24.8% the year before, which shows just how quickly the government could 'get interested' in a real threat).

3. Barclay, p70.

offering no benefits. Dulles wanted no consultative machinery established, and the pact was to apply only to instances of Communist aggression - cold comfort in the event of any other form of regional clash, such as later occurred with Indonesia. In the end, the treaty looked not much different from Anzus, except that the signatories granted themselves the right to intervene in the affairs of Indochina as and where they saw fit, and Australia took it to mean that it now had some form of security guarantee operative on the Indian Ocean side of the continent. And the US still added a unilateral reservation against involvement in any regional conflict that had not been initiated by the dreaded commies. Perhaps fortunately for Australia, it had no forces of any consequence to commit to anything, except later, to Malaya and Borneo.

The latter commitment of course was made by Menzies, in his customarily florid style, claiming that the fight against the communist threat to Australia had to be conducted "as far from our own soil as possible"<sup>1</sup>. Thailand or South Vietnam would have seemed more logical places to start the fight (the use of diplomacy seems not even to have been considered), not the next to last Domino - which already had been promised independence, something that neither the French nor the Americans seemed to find significant with regard to the shambles in Indochina. But of course, a contribution for the British Commonwealth was a contribution for Civilisation.

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1. Barclay, p79.

Menzies told the world that "there is no country in the world more completely British than Australia"; the man had not sense nor shame, nor a sense of shame. Casey despaired that Australia's tangible contribution to either of its alliances with the Americans was "so nominal there is no need to take our cooperation seriously into account"<sup>1</sup>, and this, certainly, was so. "The triangular relationship was not working out very well" because Australia was more concerned with demonstrating (alternately, depending upon who spoke) loyalty to two, often diametrically opposed, powers than with pursuing its own course. Whilst it struggled to reconcile an even greater strategic absurdity, Australia satisfied neither patron <sup>2</sup>; and the Australian position on matters of direct interest to itself, such as the Indonesian claim to Dutch New Guinea was not taken seriously into account by either of its supposed protectors. But

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1. Barclay, p81.

2. As with the commitment of Australian forces to Malaya: the Americans totally disagreed with this, and so did much Australian opinion, including that of Casey, who felt that Australia should have the forces available and trained, but kept at home for deployment as necessary. This was in keeping with the United States Joint Chiefs' own view of "flexible response". JCS Chairman Admiral Radford warned Casey that "Congress would regard Australian forces committed specifically to ... Malaya as being employed to support and maintain British colonialism." This only goes to show the absolute impenetrable density of a good part of congress, the administration and perhaps the JCS; Radford and Dulles both had been prepared not long before to go the whole hog in Vietnam to support (infinitely more intransigent) French colonialism; but they were still willing to stick it to the British. See: Barclay, p82. But then again Radford could have just been talking through his hat; no-one would accuse any American of candour in his dealings with Australia during this period.



then again it was hardly getting serious consideration from its own parliament. "The tragic figure of the minister for Foreign affairs" was accorded more respect from the other side of politics than from his own; for the simple reason that he was trying to serve Australia, whilst his leader was interested only in serving Britain and soothing America.

However, Australia managed to blunder so badly in its attempts to prove its loyalty to Britain that it effectively paved the way for an equally disastrous attempt to curry favour with America. Menzies was skating on thin ice at home, and looking for an opportunity to either quit politics on a high note, or reestablish his dominance of the dispirited conservative coalition.<sup>1</sup> Having been "carpeted by Eisenhower and Dulles for failing to speak of Chiang Kai-shek with adequate enthusiasm" (nice to discover some redeeming quality in Menzies!), the Australian Prime Minister cancelled a scheduled visit to Japan and fled for comfort to the bosom of the Empire; just in time to be recruited as an 'intermediary' for the Suez fiasco. In fact it seems he volunteered;<sup>2</sup> and made a botch of it. Far from acting as

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1. In the wake of the Petrov spy case Menzies called a premature election, hoping once more to capitalise upon a new 'Red Scare'. The conservatives scored only 47.6% of the popular vote, which was still enough to allow them somehow to cling to power. Spender was once more being "implor[ed] ... to re-enter politics to save the Liberal Party before Menzies finally destroyed it." Barclay, pp84-5.

2. As an indication of just how unreliable memoirs can be, Harold MacMillan (Riding The Storm, 1956-59, p114) claims that Menzies "happened to be in England in ... July for some trade discussions" and "reluctantly agreed to accept this task. His chief anxiety was naturally to get home as soon as possible; but great pressure was brought upon him to stay in England, and we

an impartial go-between to Nasser from the United Nations, Menzies simply conveyed to the Egyptian Premier a series of righteous British threats, and after the ensuing shambles continued to attempt to justify Britain's actions. Eisenhower refused to see Menzies when later he attempted to call. Casey's attempts to keep things sane and patch up the damage were continually undercut by his purblind boss. Against this background, Australia sought the support of the US in staving off Sukarno's continuing claim to Dutch New Guinea. This unhappy sequence of events helped pave the way for Australia finally to make some attempt to rectify the disrepair into which its forces had fallen, and later to make an effort to get visibly (but still not too materially) involved in the war in Vietnam. Not for itself - but to try and win favour from the "great and powerful". Not now another blunder; just the usual one.

American policy on the issue of West New Guinea, or Irian Barat as it was called by Sukarno's government, was one of strict non-involvement on behalf of either side. The Indonesian claim had no basis in history or ethnicity or religion, but the US

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were indeed fortunate that he yielded to the demands of patriotic duty." To whose patrie? And the account given seems very "economical with the truth". Barclay (p85) gives the lie to this nonsense, with an entry from the diary of the wife of Australia's then Commissioner to South East Asia: "Nothing could alter the fact that the sudden cancellation of the tour was a rebuff to the hypersensitive Japanese, and it did not make things better to feel, as Alan [her husband, Sir Alan Watt] did, that the P.M. was being used to pull other peoples' chestnuts out of the fire, and [had] showed again his attitude to the East." Menzies did not even try the Bush excuse of pressing domestic problems.

would not overtly oppose it, even though the two Dulles brothers did concoct one of those covert action fiascos in an attempt to get rid of Sukarno in 1958, which Foster reasoned might result in a more moderate Indonesian attitude to the issue of Irian Barat's absorption into Indonesia. Allen presumably regarded it as just another day out for the boys. But the operation was a flop, and Sukarno ever more strident. Eventually, he commenced overt hostilities, which the Dutch resisted with some ease. Australia was willing to cooperate militarily with the Dutch, to stave off Indonesia, and to gain time for a gradual decolonisation of the territory, perhaps in concert with Australia's territory which it bordered to the east. But both realised the status quo, or something close to it, was untenable without overt support from the United States. This never came.

The US, embarrassed by the obvious evidence of its complicity<sup>1</sup> in the rebellions put down by Sukarno, was now

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1. In what was to become close to standard form for CIA adventures, a "private" attack bomber was shot down and the pilot caught alive. He naturally identified his sponsors, reckoning himself more likely to be freed by their intercession than by his denial of any employer at all. The motivation for this mess was that Sukarno "scornfully rejected American advice and resisted the pressure that went along with US aid." Hardly unique in the world. See: Mosley, Dulles, pp436-8. Interestingly enough, the otherwise exhaustive study of George McT. Kahin, Major Governments of Asia acknowledges that "American military supplies to the rebels continued to arrive in considerable quantities" but skips around mention of direct American involvement "several Americans described by Secretary Dulles as "soldiers of fortune" but "regarded by the Indonesians as CIA agents, flew planes for the rebels..". Kahin then goes on to talk about how the Philippines government was accused of being at fault for allowing "the rebels" to fly out of Clark Field. Which only proves what a joke Filipino independence was - no better than Australian. But the edition that I read was published in 1967, when it presumably was considered inconvenient to say such things. Kahin's study is



attempting to buy him off with weapons and the British seemed ready to follow suit. Australia protested to both; the British backed off, the Americans simply said that what they didn't sell (or give away) the Communists (type unspecified) would. The US position on New Guinea now underwent a series of twists and turns, at least in private discussions with Australia, as Dulles sought to mollify its ally. He wanted its unreserved support for the stance being taken with regard to Quemoy and Matsu, which China again was demanding should be evacuated and returned by the Taiwan government.

But the situation in the offshore islands calmed, and Australia was back to square one in its dealings vice New Guinea. Worse, the US and the USSR were now at the competitive bidding stage for Indonesian affections: the Russians supplied their first load of arms to Indonesia in early 1959, and Krushchev was to pay a state visit in early 1960. At this critical point, Australia's capable but much undermined (by his own leader and his clique) Foreign Minister finally resigned (in January 1960) and "Menzies solved the problem of finding a worthy successor by taking the job on himself."<sup>1</sup> It was not one of his better decisions. Within months he had managed to make a fool of himself and humiliate his country in the United Nations by "attempting to humiliate the Indonesians and curry favour with the Americans at -----  
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still worth reading, for all that. He understood his subject much better than most of his political masters did.

1.Barclay, p116.



the same time" by a fatally misjudged amendment to an Indonesian resolution for rescheduling the aborted Eisenhower-Kruschev summit. Menzies of course wanted to include Britain and France. But all he did was "raise serious doubts"<sup>1</sup> about his judgment, compounding the folly of his Suez fiasco.

Fortunately for Australia, Menzies' ineptitude as Foreign Minister was accompanied by a good deal of understanding from a new US administration that, though it was still inclined to support Irian Barat going to Indonesia, was also prepared to state unequivocally that Australia had its guarantee of support in the event of hostilities subsequently breaking out if Indonesia decided to perhaps go further east into Australian administered territory. Secretary of State Rusk was willing to give these guarantees<sup>2</sup> because it was already apparent that any increased involvement in South Vietnam would best be made in concert with as many of the SEATO allies as possible showing some visible support for the Saigon Government.<sup>3</sup> This would help justify US actions, whilst presenting the image still of a common front against communist aggression.

In 1962 Menzies made a token offering of Australian combat

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1. Barclay, p118.

2. In the Final Communique of the ANZUS Council, 9 May 1962. This in Harper, p193.

3. Barclay, pp122-4.

advisers - the US CINCPAC said he could use a few patrol boats.<sup>1</sup> But these Australia's Navy did not possess, and the minesweepers that might have been used were all sent to work in Malaysian waters to counter Indonesian infiltration. It seems not to have occurred to the government that it could have built and manned such craft in a fairly short time had it put its mind to it; but it did not and when the Navy did get purpose built patrol boats later (1968 onwards), they were not sent. Eventually, a somewhat larger team of army advisers than originally proposed was sent to Vietnam in late 1962. But by then the fate of Irian Barat had been sealed, and it was a long time before an Australian combat unit was made available.

In the meantime, it became apparent even to Menzies, who in his dotage was becomingly even more nauseatingly devoted to Queen, and (her) country, that Britain really was on the way out of Asia, and on the way in to Europe. Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (and thus a considerable disruption to Australian trade patterns) was averted thanks to France, which blackballed Perfidious Albion's membership nomination. But it was only postponing the inevitable; and Britain's share of Australian overseas trade was falling rapidly.<sup>2</sup> Britain sent out Queen Elizabeth and her husband in 1962 to stir the (outraged) loyal

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1. Barclay, p126.

2. By 1966-7, it was no longer Australia's largest export market; that title now belonged to Japan, as it still does. In 1966-7, too, the United States displaced Britain as Australia's main source of imports. See: T.B. Millar, Australia in Peace and War, pp220 & 272.

hearts in the land it had tried to 'abandon', but despite the Prime Minister's public protestation of undying love at a state dinner ("the Queen faltered as she began her address in reply. The nation squirmed") it was clear that Australia had given up on the idea of a dual protectorate, and had finally cast its lot unreservedly with the United States.

Most new equipment for all three services was being ordered in the US; and the US navy was about to construct a communications station on Australian soil, to enable it to communicate with submarines and surface ships in the Indian ocean and Southeast Asia. This did more than provide grist for the mill of the "Australia is a nuclear target" lobby; it also permitted Australian governments ever after to mouth the conceit that Australia was, just by being there in the Southern Hemisphere, making a substantial - and very passive - contribution "to the mutual purpose of the ANZUS pact and ... to the security of the free world generally."<sup>1</sup> But at the same time, even with some rise in defence expenditure due to new programmes, the defence budget only inched up from 2.65% (it lowest postwar level) to 2.9% of GNP. Despite the increasing tension between Sukarno and the newly-formed Federation of Malaysia, and the very real possibility of the need for a significant contribution, both civil and military, to be made in Vietnam, there was no great

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1. Barclay, op.cit. p129. Quoting the announcement of the agreement in May 1963 by Foreign Minister Garfield Barwick.

sense of urgency in any of the government's actions<sup>1</sup>. This alone however, could not undermine the evident determination of the new Foreign Minister, Paul Hasluck, for Australia to demonstrate its resolve and commitment to American policy by getting more involved in the war in Vietnam.

American officialdom remained studiously polite, even encouraging: Secretary Rusk was nothing if not a gentleman; President Johnson was sure Australia would come round eventually. But even Rusk saw Australia's development and military aid efforts in South East Asia as too narrow in scope and too little in amount; and TIME magazine, probably more influential then than now, ridiculed Australia's decrepit armed forces and miserly spending on defence, which made the nation, "a SEATO member and often hopefully regarded as the West's anchor in the South Pacific, woefully unable to back up its brave intentions."<sup>2</sup>

The "bravery" of these intentions existed only on one side of the House Of Representatives. The Labor Party, still in opposition (but not by much) was utterly opposed to Australia getting involved in the war. Menzies and the Catholic Church-----

1. Some detail of the measures taken is given in: Reese, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, pp290-300. The motivation seems to have come as much from Sukarno's success in West Irian and the start of Confrontation of Malaysia, as much as anything else. The increasing likelihood of a British withdrawal from "east of Suez" also played a major part.

2. "Australia: Poor Military Posture", TIME, 29 May 1991, p27. The article also observed that: "Australia's air force is obsolete, its navy a memory, its 23,000 man army smaller than Cambodia's. The country has no draft [soon remedied by Menzies], spends less than 3% of its [GNP] on defence [compared with] nearly 7% in Britain and more than 9% in the U.S."



backed<sup>1</sup> Democratic Labour Party (which had split from the parent in 1955) conspired to whip up another Red Scare to overcome the very reasonable objections to Australia's (or anyone else's) intervention, which later were put by Labor leader Arthur Calwell:

We talk about the lesson of Munich as if we had never learnt a single lesson since 1938. Preoccupied with the fear of a military Munich, we have suffered a score of moral Dunkirks. ... we have channelled the great bulk of our aid to Asia towards military expenditure. Preoccupied with the idea of monolithic, imperialistic Communism, we have channelled our support to those military regimes which were loudest in their professions of anti-Communism, no matter how reactionary, unpopular or corrupt they may have been...

Preoccupied with so-called Western interests, we have never successfully supported nationalism as the mighty force it is against Communism. We have supported [it] only when it supported the West ...

We have committed ourselves to the propositions that Communism can be defeated by military means alone and that it is the function of European troops to impose the will of the West upon Asia. These are dangerous,

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1. In many ways, in a strange turnabout from the days of Archbishop Mannix' fervent and successful opposition of "imperialist" Labor under Billy Hughes. Mannix, now a Cardinal, now fought against communism, via what were known as the "Industrial Groups" that sought to overcome (undermine might be a better word) communist domination of union executives. It is a story worth a few books on its own. A great flavour of the times is captured in Frank Hardy's "Power Without glory", regardless of his "Left-orientation", which I don't think shows through excessively in his "factional" novel, but is nonetheless sufficiently evident for the doctrinaire right to reject it out of hand as a misrepresentation of what seems on balance to very well state conditions of the period he writes about.

delusive and disastrous propositions.<sup>1</sup>.

Although intelligent and sincere, and eloquent in print, Calwell was cursed with the charisma of a cabbage and the voice of an untuned violin, and could not compete with the masterly - if empty - public speaking and debating skills of Menzies, nor with the easy charm of Menzies' likeable successor Harold Holt. Foreign Minister Paul Hasluck, an altogether more formidable figure than any of the leaders, was firmly on the side of the Red Menace brigade, and said so repeatedly in public. He could put a forceful argument, and his view was undoubtedly reinforced by unremitting pressure "from the end of 1962 to the beginning of 1965 [from] our Embassy in Washington". In what seems to have been pretty standard vein, one cable stated:

South Vietnam is an area in which Australia can, without disproportionate expenditure, pick up a lot of credit with the United States. *Our objectives should be to achieve such habitual closeness with the United States and a sense of mutual reliance that in our time of need - such as a crisis in our relations with*

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1. For Calwell's speech to the House, on 4 May 1965, see: Harper, pp203-210. Calwell said, too, that the government had "grotesquely oversimplified" the problems in Vietnam, and its action would neither help the fight against Communism nor benefit the Vietnamese people. America, he said, would most likely be "humiliated"; through either outright defeat, or by becoming "interminably bogged down in the awful morass" of the war. It seems he had a point or two. Calwell also took care to assure the Australian troops that "our hearts and prayers are with you." Although he could not support the government's decision, the Labor Party would "do our duty to the utmost in supporting you to do your duty ... we shall never deny you the aid and support that it is your right to expect in the service of your country ...". And thus pre-empted the specious charge made in later times that policy disagreement was equivalent to betrayal of the men in the field. Hard to believe this is the same man who once said "two Wongs don't make a White".

*Indonesia - the United States would have little option but to respond as we would want. (my emphasis)*<sup>1</sup>

Shortly before the Gulf Of Tonkin incident in August 1964 changed the whole course of Southeast Asian (probably, world) history, Menzies assured the United States public that whatever might happen in that region, "my little country and your great country will be together through thick and thin."<sup>2</sup> This doubtless was a great comfort to the citizens of Chicago. The following

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1. Quoted in Freudenberg, op.cit., p161. The cable was sent in May 1964; no further detail given.

2. In a speech to the Australian-American Association in Chicago. Cited by Barclay, p142.

year brought the first commitment of Australian infantry to Vietnam. In the House, Menzies excoriated Arthur Calwell and his Labor Party:

I do not understand how my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, can delude himself on this matter. ... I would hate to be the head of a government which had to say to the United States on an occasion like this [South Vietnam's solicited 'request'] : 'Sorry, we can do nothing about it. We will help you with debate in the United Nations. We will offer some fine words and some good sentiments. But, as for practical action, no: that is for you. American soldiers from the Middle West can go and fight and die in South Vietnam, but that is not for us.' I think that is a disastrous proposition for any Opposition to put forward.<sup>1</sup>

Menzies so successfully obfuscated the real issue that the Opposition's stand was electorally disastrous; but the government's actions were more in keeping with the sentiments, implied by innuendo, which Menzies had lambasted Calwell for adhering to. Menzies' 'commitment', of a single battalion, itself showed little more than a "good sentiment". It was nowhere near enough to earn much appreciation<sup>2</sup> - the Joint Chiefs had

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1. Quoted by Freudenberg, op.cit., p162. As Freudenberg observes, "it is difficult to convey the force of his sweeping simplicities except to those who also have been under the wand of the magician."

2. Except from President Johnson, who was "delighted at [your] decision", and probably saw it as the start of something bigger. Johnson's message to Menzies concluded: "... this action proves again the deep ties between our two countries in the cause of world peace and security. As you know, my personal experiences in association with Australians during World War II have made this a particularly deep and abiding feeling for me. I am confident that our two nations, working together, can ... [bring] about the peace that South Vietnam and South-East Asia deserve." See: Harper, Australia and the United States, p203. Johnson was in Australia for about a month in May-June 1942, going on a bombing mission on 8 June. The next day, on his way out of the country, Johnson's aircraft got lost and had to land in "El Paso desert



complained that things would probably go just like Korea, where most of the support given the US had been "verbal", while the US, they lamented, "took all the casualties and paid all the bills"<sup>1</sup>. Australia might, as new Prime Minister Holt cheerily said, be going "all the way with LBJ", but it was doing so more in spirit than in substance. The Australian forces in Vietnam never amounted to more than a half-division's worth of men, including the aircrews committed either with the Australian ground forces or scattered amongst the Americans. The Navy provided one destroyer in Vietnamese waters, and some diving teams and a helicopter flight. What they did was well done - they just couldn't do very much of it. Was this enough "to be regarded and to remain as a valued ally of the United States"? No: Secretary of State Rusk himself thought Australia (along with the other SEATO "allies") should have done more.<sup>2</sup>

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...Continued...

country" in western Queensland. Johnson got out and began 'working' the locals. One of the aircrew recalled "Johnson is shaking hands all round, and he comes back and tells us these are real folks - the best damn folks in the world, except maybe the folks in his own Texas ... there's no question he swung that county for Johnson before we left. He was in his element." See: Robert A. Caro, The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent, p44. Perhaps it was Johnson's 'electoral' success in this Australian El Paso that did not allow him to see that Australia had quite deliberately been working to "lock-in" the United States in Southeast Asia.

1. Mike Gravel (ed.), The Pentagon Papers vol. III, p625. Cited by Barclay, p145.

2. Dean Rusk, as told to Richard Rusk, As I Saw It, New York, Penguin, 1991. p455.

Although the Australian defence budget almost doubled between 1963 and 1968, much of it went on new equipment that had only limited application to the war.<sup>1</sup> The army was nearly doubled in size by the introduction of selective military service, but even then its strength was less than 40,000 - a far cry from the efforts of the World War. Not long after he had informed President Johnson<sup>2</sup> of his magnificent gesture, Menzies quit the political stage, more fully to pursue life as an Englishman. His political epitaph, as written by the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>3</sup>, acutely summarised Australia's international performance up to January 1966:

Menzies succeeded [in 1949] and has succeeded since because he sensed and knew well how to clothe and dramatise the fundamental fear in the electorate. [He promised] safety from within by exorcising Communism; safety from without by firmly committing Australia to "her great and powerful friends" ... [but overall, in foreign relations] He has given the form, but failed lamentably in achieving the substance....

The *Herald* seemed to think that Menzies had done well in resisting the "isolationism that the Labor opposition would have

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1. The new ships and aircraft on order had in the main been authorised to counter the Indonesian 'menace' of the early to mid-1960s. By the time most of these things had been delivered, confrontation was ended and Suharto was pursuing a policy of regional 'reintegration', domestic anti-Communism and globally, a superficially more scrupulous non-alignment.

2. Johnson's cable of thanks arrived even before Canberra received the "request" from South Vietnam for the military assistance it now had offered in purported "response" to that request. See: Freudenberg, op.cit., p161.

3. See Crowley, vol.2. pp498-500

forced on the country with its antipathies for ANZUS, ANZAM and SEATO alliances"; but this misrepresented the facts. Labour under Evatt and Calwell had been all for all three; and like Menzies had been against any substantial commitment to any of them. Menzies' legacy was more serious than that of a cheapskate groveller, though:

He has humiliated Australia with his intervention in the Suez crisis; alienated Australia from the Afro-Asian bloc with his [white supremacist outlook, including] seeming support of Verwoerd's apartheid policy; and left Australia looking weak and foolish [over] the West New Guinea issue. [in economic and social policy] his failure was only less than it was on matters of defence and foreign affairs....

This same man was described by former President Nixon as having a "sensible, comprehensive outlook on foreign affairs that centred on Australia's growing role as a Far Eastern power."<sup>1</sup> But Menzies had embarked, more deliberately and more consciously than Billy Hughes, upon a policy of subservience to great powers that won Nixon's admiration only because of Menzies' stalwart anti-communism.\* In fact, Menzies and his party had survived in office as long as they had not due to electoral appeal, but due to the -----

1. Richard M. Nixon, Leaders, New York, Touchstone, 1982. p313.

\* And is the more surprising given Nixon's own pragmatism; but perhaps it was just that, with an eye to Australian readers, which affected his comment. However, Nixon was not entirely incorrect about the sense of 'debt'. In Canberra, there is an annual "Coral Sea Day" marked by a brief ceremony and the usual speeches reiterating the usual platitudes. Without in any way dismissing all that was done by the US, I wonder how much longer we have to go on giving thanks for Australia's 'salvation'. The event is largely a diplomatic exercise that nowadays gets little attention; but I still think it is one of those things that helps overdo the illusion of 'solidarity in war and peace'.



vagaries of the Australian electoral system and a fractured opposition that lacked leaders with mass appeal<sup>1</sup>. Even then, Labor regularly scored close to or over 50% of the popular primary vote. Menzies may well have looked great to Nixon - he was an inveterate flatterer, the cultural cringe personified. He was in short a great follower - just what the US wanted. And just what Australia least needed. As Nixon more astutely observed, Menzies was "in a way, paying back a debt with his active support of the United States in Vietnam." But Nixon thought it was the United States' salvation of Australia during the Second World War that Menzies was indebted for; not the free-ride to partial prominence on the coattails of the powerful.<sup>2</sup> Part of Menzies' survival technique had been to gut his party of talent; the results now really began to show.

### Not Quite All The Way

President Johnson visited Australia in 1966, to demonstrate his support for (Menzies' successor) Harold Holt, whom he was sure would respond in a more practical way than had Menzies. Holt did, but with a drop (another 1800 men, followed by a later  
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1. Evatt became Labor Party leader after Chifley's death in March 1952. He did not much better with Australians than he had with Americans. The Labor Party split of 1955 was directly responsible for its failure to gain government until 1972. The 'offcut' of the Democratic Labor Party was devoted to nothing other than fighting Godless Communism and preventing a Labor Government in Australia. Its preferences were always directed to the conservative coalition. Harold MacMillan (Riding The Storm, p405) "...could not help remarking to Menzies ... that I thought he was uncommonly lucky in his principal opponent."

2. Ibid., p318.



increment of another 1100) in what was becoming for the US a very big bucket. Johnson's visit proved popular, but also drew some highly visible protests from among the growing number of people who believed that Australia should not even be sharing a carriage with the US, let alone staying aboard regardless of ultimate destination. Holt's maladroit use of an American campaign slogan, meant to please an American audience, enraged many Australians, even among those who supported the war.\* He had committed the unforgivable sin of exposing to Australians themselves their status as a great-power lackey. Opposition to the war began to grow, and neighboring nations in Southeast Asia were beginning to think that involvement on the US side -even support for its position - carried more political risks than it did benefits.

The government of Johnson's good friend Harold Holt ran out of commitment - it was already looking for a means to gracefully disappear when Clark Clifford came begging for more troops in 1967. In his report to the President, Clifford observed that:

either the Australians do not believe that their vital interests are at stake to a point requiring immediate sacrifice, or they believe that we [the US] are so deeply involved that we must carry through to a conclusion satisfactory to them as well as to us.

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\* I know it offended the hell out of me, and I was only 14 at the time and thoroughly indoctrinated with "ANZAC spirit". If we discussed it at all at school (usually in the context of someone we knew getting 'called-up'), we usually agreed that being in the war was more or less "doing the right thing" - and we had after all been on the winning side in Malaya (we didn't understand the gaping chasm of circumstance separating the two conflicts). But Holt's words were too obviously subservient, too much an echo of Menzies' public grovelling to Queen Elizabeth and the hated Poms only a few years before. Few of us dared put these views before our elders, I might add.

Clifford was "puzzled and troubled, dismayed by our failure to get more support from our allies ... shocked at the failure of the countries whose security we believed we were defending to do more for themselves. Australia, which had given so much during World War II [acknowledgement at last!!], dismayed us the most." The President, Clifford relates, had "counted on more from his good friend Harold Holt"<sup>1</sup>, and from a country for which he apparently did feel some personal affection - even if it was an affection, as Ambassador Marshall Green said in later years, rooted in a view of Australia as "the next large rectangular state beyond El Paso".<sup>2</sup>

Clifford's quick analysis of Australia's position was fairly close to the mark, but it was not a question, as his lawyer's mind suggested, of "either, or". earlier, it clearly had been Australia's intention to 'entangle' America in Vietnam and thus in Southeast Asia, for the reason that Clifford suggested. But his observation that Australia did not really believe its vital interests to be at stake was equally valid. There had never been real agreement on just what the threat was in Vietnam; just a vague feeling that Australia ought to "show willing" to stay in the good graces of its ally and protector. Ambivalence about the whole relationship with the US was beginning to spread, with  
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1. Clark Clifford, Counsel to the President, New York, Random House, 1991. pp450-1.

2. Marshall Green, speech to the Asia Society of New York, 12 March 1975. Barclay and Siracusa, Australian-American Relations Since 1945, p113.

increasing fears of cultural and commercial domination becoming apparent<sup>1</sup>. After the Sino-Soviet split demolished the idea of 'monolithic' communist conspiracy, the successful conclusion of the Malayan 'emergency', and the overthrow of Sukarno and the subsequent purge of the PKI<sup>2</sup> by the Indonesia Army, fear of Chinese expansionism had just faded away. Absorption into an amorphous mass of Americanism seemed as big a danger, almost, as had once the yellow peril - and that old bogey was at last entering its death throes, as was support for the abominable White Australia Policy. An Australian expatriate journalist, writing for the London Times in January 1968, observed that:

Some Australian nationalists find a painful irony in the circumstance that, having fought against British influence all their lives, they have won their battle only to find that American influence has taken its place. Will Australia never be independent, they ask? Certainly, there is something disturbing in the apparent eagerness of many Australians to accept the

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1. Australia was not alone in this. It is easily forgotten - perhaps nowhere more than in America besieged by Japanese commercial acumen and fragmented by endless dispute over the last piece of pork in the nearly exhausted barrel - that only in 1968 (the depth of Johnson's slough of despond) Europeans were being warned that : "Today's generation faces ... a clear choice of building an independent Europe or letting it become an annex of the United States. The sheer weight of American power is pushing our countries along the path of annexation, and the point of no return may be reached [within a decade]." See: Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, The American Challenge, p189.

2. *Parti Komunis Indonesia*. By this time it was definitely "Beijing oriented"; the Indonesians had found the Russians too overbearing; just like the rest of the "west". I base this observation not on Sukarno's reputed performance, nor upon contemporary interpretation, but on my own observation, weak as it may be. Indonesian officers of enough seniority to have worked both sides of the fence have told me that they felt their Russian instructors and advisers were too pushy - just like Americans, really.

status of Uncle Sam's favorite satellite.  
To balance this is a new cosmopolitanism, with a  
special stress on Asia, that is wholly good.<sup>1</sup>

This mood was filtering through the electorate, and though it was less anti-American than pro-Australian (leavened with a greater sympathy for Asian self-determination, perhaps), it was given a powerful boost by the increasing evidence of American self-doubt and social division over the war and indeed the role of the US abroad. As another contemporary observer noted, the very fact that since the Second World War, Australians had begun to take America more seriously, meant also that they tended to look at it with a more critically appraising eye<sup>2</sup>. The public held the government responsible for getting them into this mess, and though few were in favour of simply 'running out on your mate' in Vietnam, the whole issue of Australian dependency upon and policy subservience to the great and powerful was becoming one of the chief indictments leveled against the government. The conservative coalition was going down in the polls and set fair to lose the next general election when John Gorton succeeded the deceased Harold Holt in January 1968.

Gorton had to be plucked from the Senate and found a seat in the 'Lower House', so short of leaders had the Liberal Party become. Within a month (during the Tet offensive), he stated flatly that Australia would not increase its comitment in  
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1. Crowley, vol.2, p543.

2. Harper, p264. Bruce Grant is the author of the article from which the comment was taken.



Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> He continued publicly to support the American position, but with a "distinct lack of enthusiasm". More than any conservative Prime Minister before or after him, Gorton was a 'man of the people'; and his unease reflected that of the public at large.<sup>2</sup> So too, however, did his belief in the necessity for the presence in Asia of the 'Great Powers'. He tried to persuade Britain not to withdraw from Malaysia and Singapore, without success.<sup>3</sup> And he continued to profess his belief in the "guaranteed security we and New Zealand enjoy under the ANZUS Pact".<sup>4</sup>

As the White House, under increasing stress, cast desperately about for ways to end the fighting and start useful negotiations to end the war, it perhaps understandably omitted on occasion to inform the Australian government what was going on, and what it intended to do. Gorton found himself continually and publicly wrong-footed, supporting, or at least defending, one US policy even as it was supplanted by another.<sup>5</sup> The opposition,

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1. Barclay and Siracusa, p87.

2. See: Barclay and Siracusa, p89. Also, Manning Clark, A Short History of Australia, pp237-8.

3. Millar, p191. This decision by a British Labour government was partially reversed by the Conservatives in 1971.

4. Barclay and Siracusa, p89.

5. The stop-go policies with bombing halts and cease-fires left Gorton adrift on a stormy political sea. And Hasluck actually came out supporting continued bombing even as the White House had decided upon a halt, which he and the government found out about virtually as it took effect five days later. There were more instances like this, culminating in Nixon's visit to China. See a series of documents in Barclay and Siracusa, pp86-108. Part of

under new and very loquacious management, made political hay from the fact that Australia, the US' valued ally, was being kept in the dark. Labor policy moved from advocating bombing halts to complete Australian withdrawal - ending conscription, a traditional Labor stance, was already on the books.

It should have come as no surprise to either side of Australian politics when President Richard Nixon announced a new "doctrine" for the employment and commitment of American forces abroad. Coming on top of Britain's stated intention to withdraw completely from east of Suez by 1970, it should have galvanised Australia into a thoroughgoing review of its security objectives and relationships, especially in Southeast Asia. New ideas were called for, but nothing really bubbled to the surface. The Labor party was coming (reverting?) to the view that it was just plain immoral and unproductive to deploy or station Australian forces overseas, and Gorton himself, though he had publicly undertaken to ensure that British withdrawal from Malaysia would be at least partially balanced by an enhanced Australian commitment of air and naval forces, was still toying with what was basically a 'fortress Australia' defence policy. Labor also reaffirmed its faith in ANZUS, although it started to endorse a wider and

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the reason may been the chronic 'leakiness' of both governments' supposedly loyal and impartial bureaucracies.

somewhat fuzzy conception of it as "an instrument for justice and peace and political, social and economic advancement in the Pacific area."<sup>1</sup>

Overall, US-Australian relations just seemed to drift as each became increasingly preoccupied with domestic political events, and the US turned its attention to wider agenda of normalisation of relationships with China, and the prospect of some kind of reduction of tensions with the USSR. Internal party tensions saw Gorton relieved of the Prime Ministership\* in March 1971. His successor, William McMahon, could not arrest the slide from public favour of the conservative parties. Like Gorton, McMahon was continually put on the 'back foot' by American initiatives of which he knew nothing in advance. President Nixon had told Gorton in 1969 that "Australia and the United States can

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1. Harper, pp247-9. Taken from the Australian Labor Party, Recommended New Platform on Foreign Affairs, endorsed at 29th Federal Conference, 20 June 1971. One might observe that, in a Bush-like swipe at the US Government, the Conference decided that "Labor seeks close and continuing cooperation with the **people** of the United States..", implying that only the government was the problem. Perhaps it should have invited them to rise up against their rulers.

\* The catalyst for the party vote on the leadership was the resignation of the Army Minister, John Malcolm Fraser. This stemmed from a dispute between Fraser and the Chief of The General Staff, LtGen Sir Thomas Daly, who himself had tendered his resignation because he could not abide Fraser's style. Gorton sympathised with the CGS; Fraser accused him of "significant disloyalty to a Cabinet Minister", and things progressed from there. The party vote on the leadership was tied, and Gorton as Parliamentary Party Chairman used his own casting vote against himself.

both be proud of the contribution we are making, as partners" to the "security and progress of the Pacific region". Partnership clearly had its limits.

Having taken office halfway through a parliamentary term, McMahon was in the unenviable position of being regarded almost from the outset as a 'lame duck' Prime Minister. His party was in increasing disarray, and in the 1972 Australian general election, the voters agreed with Gough Whitlam and his Labor party that it was time for a change, after 23 years of decreasingly adequate conservative rule. Relations with the US were not spared from the new broom. It was heralded by an abrupt termination of the residual Australian involvement in Vietnam, of which the US was given little notice. Relations did not prosper over the next three years, although the US was sufficiently alarmed by Labor's performance on gaining office to appoint at last a professional diplomat to the Canberra Embassy.



CHAPTER 6  
PARTNERSHIP: WHITLAM TO HAWKE

My Government wants to move away from the narrow view that the ANZUS Treaty is the only significant factor in our relationship with the United States, and the equally narrow view that our relations with the United States are the only significant factor in Australia's foreign relations.<sup>1</sup>

THE WHITLAM SHOCKS, 1972-75

The new Labor Government was sympathetic to and supportive of the general reluctance increasingly being shown among the ASEAN nations to have much in the way of an overt defence relationship with any non-regional nation of either ideological bloc.<sup>2</sup> It embraced with considerably greater fervour than its

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1. Gough Whitlam, reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, 31 July 1973. In Barclay and Siracusa, p110.

2. The idea of "neutralising Southeast Asia" seems to have originated in Malaysia, which proposed it in April 1970 in Dar-es-Salaam, and elucidated the proposal of "neutralisation of not only the Indo-China States but of the entire region of Southeast Asia, guaranteed by the three major powers [USA, USSR, China], against any form of external interference, threat or pressure" at the Lusaka Non-Aligned Conference in September 1970. Malaysia said this desire was not incompatible with the impending 're-write' of its defence relationship with Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Britain (the Five Power Defence Agreement, effective 1 November 1971) since the FPDA was intended for "current defence needs" whilst neutralisation was seen as a "long term solution". Indonesia was against the notion of "external guarantee" of neutrality; not unreasonably, given all the major powers' interventionist records and Indonesian xenophobia. The compromise was ASEAN's adoption in 1971 of a resolution calling for its members to work to secure "recognition of, and respect

predecessors the notion that Australia must, as in the days of Curtin, Chifley and Evatt, stand up for the rights and aspirations of all nations weak and small. Perhaps taking a too-literal interpretation of the rhetoric emanating regularly from its Asian neighbour Indonesia, and encouraged by the increasingly regionalist, non-aligned (or neutralist) stance of Malaysia, Labour sought to rapidly establish its regional credentials as a nation that would be:

...[taking] a more independent ... stance in international affairs and ... will be less militarily oriented and not open to suggestions of racism; an Australia which will enjoy a growing standing as a distinctive, tolerant, co-operative and well-regarded nation not only in the Asian and Pacific region but in the world at large....<sup>1</sup>

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for, Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers." In Moscow in 1972, Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak expatiated upon this statement, saying that ASEAN now saw that "the responsibility for [implementing neutralisation] now rests with the countries of Southeast Asia themselves"; but he hoped for Soviet "sympathy and understanding", and by implication that of the USA and China. See: Roy Allison, The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988; pp132-5. Also: Michael Leifer, ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia, London, Routledge, 1989. The latter book is especially valuable, as its title implies, for understanding of the currents and eddies within a decidedly non-monolithic grouping of very different nations within what "the West" is all too ready to regard as the 'blob' of Southeast Asia. Allison, too, deals very well with his wider-ranging subject.

1. As stated by Whitlam in his first speech as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Cited by T.B. Millar, Australia in Peace and War, pp405-6.

Whitlam was signalling that Australia would no longer look only to the west, and specifically to the US, for its cues on foreign policy. This was made clear by the abruptness of the announced withdrawal of the advisers remaining in Vietnam, and the equally abrupt cessation of all other aid to the governments of both South Vietnam and Cambodia. A few days later, Whitlam fired off a formal protest to Washington, deploring President Nixon's resumption of bombing of North Vietnam. This showed little understanding of Nixon's ultimate objective, which was to bring the North Vietnamese back to the negotiating table<sup>1</sup>. Worse than this though, was the hysterical public comment of some Labor Ministers, including the Deputy Prime-Minister<sup>2</sup>, whose ideological biases got the better of their senses of propriety and proportion; the Americans were, variously, "brutal, indiscriminate", "maniacs" and "mass murderers", according to this august trio.

Washington was furious: "the State Department wanted to know what had happened to Australia which they had always

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1. I have not, however, discovered any evidence that the Australian government was aware either of the intent or the motive of the American President. Perhaps it was no less in the dark than those it had so recently derided. And American press reaction was hardly restrained in tone.

2. Dr J.F. Cairns, whose rise to public prominence was fuelled chiefly by his anti-Vietnam protest activities. The others were Clyde Cameron (Labour and Immigration) and Tom Uren (Urban Affairs). See Barclay, op.cit. p185. Interestingly enough, Uren, by now long out of the Parliament, claimed that he had achieved the release of Australians held hostage by Saddam Hussein in late 1990, by the expedient of denigrating the actions of the Australian (Labor) Government in supporting UN Sanctions, and accusing his Prime Minister of being an American lackey.

considered to be a loyal ally."<sup>1</sup> This reaction told the whole story of the American view of relations with its minor ally - its value lay solely in its acquiescence, and in swelling the numbers in the US international chorus of support. President Nixon hinted at economic reprisal, displaying a fine instinct for his detractor's weak spot, and his Secretary of State complained that even countries unfriendly to the US had not reacted so intemperately. But then none of these (Rogers mentioned China, India and the USSR) had suffered the embarrassment of being so closely associated politically with a course of action that to many, home and away, had seemed ill-advised in concept and indefensible in execution. Nonetheless, Whitlam and his men might have eased into matters a bit more carefully; they were now the Government of Australia, not just a political party. And Australia's Vietnam involvement had been a dilemma of its own making.

Furthermore, even as Australia renounced the idea of "forward defence" and a "militarised" foreign policy, it remained psychologically dependent upon the United States to guarantee its ultimate physical security; a problem that Whitlam apparently recognised but was of no mind to rectify. He sought instead to placate the Americans, resorting to a peculiar amalgam of contrition and bluster. He wrote a "circumspect and courteous" letter to Nixon, and told American Ambassador Rice that he (Whitlam) personally supported the ANZUS Treaty and thought the

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1. Ibid.



US got good value from its facilities in Australia; but the latter were at risk if the US were seen to be trying to lead Australia around by the nose.<sup>1</sup> He was clearly trying to expiate his government from accusations of "anti-Americanism" by resorting to the claim that he was hostage to public opinion that favoured a more visibly independent stance vis-a-vis the US. To an extent he was reverting to the "domestic political circumstances" used in 1954 by Casey to evade making a commitment in favour of Dulles' wish for allied intervention in Vietnam during the battle for Dien Bien Phu. But the Government's performance had brought upon it the wrath and apparently the lasting distrust of the United States administration - and probably of a large section of Congress as well. Even the American Trade Unions had vented their spleen on Australia.<sup>2</sup>

As ever, Australians failed to calculate upon the depth of American chauvinism, which even as the country was embroiled in bitter internal dissension did not prevent Americans from equally passionate resentment of external criticism and "disloyalty". Nixon's reference to a supportive 'silent majority' was no hollow claim, as proven by his landslide victory in 1972. Australian espousal of Zones of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, and Nuclear Free Zones, besides a significant departure from the Atlantic  
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1. Barclay, pp185-6.

2. Ibid. Australian maritime unions "placed a ban on US shipping" and longshoremen on the US east coast retaliated with bans on handling Australian cargoes. It was not only this issue, either. The CIA was concerned that Labor's zealous and none-too-discreet ministry would 'blow' a lot of information that had been given in good faith to its Australian opposite numbers.

position upon South Africa and matters of decolonisation generally, certainly did not help relations with the United States - but they gained Australia precious little internationally as well. Australia could have given substance to its rhetoric by calling for a review of ANZUS; even by serving its one years' notice of intent to abrogate. But it did not. Australia had let its mouth lead where its body would not follow.

Whitlam said that the he wanted "to move away from the narrow view that the ANZUS Treaty is the only significant factor in our relations with the United States", but diplomatically, this was still the case. Despite mounting tension over the lack of Australian oversight of and participation in the activities conducted in or via the US facilities in Australia, Australia was not willing to give up its ANZUS "guarantee". The administration knew it, and itself could raise the spectre of walking out of ANZUS if the Australian government threatened to get completely out of hand and "do its own thing" internationally.

Whitlam and his braves could not bring themselves to make such an assertion of sovereignty - probably because they feared that this would finally snap the slender threads of public support keeping them in power. The effect of nearly two centuries' brainwashing about the "indefensible continent", and the concerted propaganda of Menzies and his successors, could not be lightly dismissed. Further, the government's political naivete and technical ineptitude was driving the economy under and inflation ever upward. It held itself hostage to the totally

unreasonable demands of some of the world's most rabidly selfish trade unions, and added to that had completely mismanaged the currency in a way that was helping to kill domestic industry. Some ideologues spoke hopefully of a post-industrial society, but what they were creating was a pre-industrial one that was becoming less, not more, self-reliant.

Whitlam's government also failed to see the reality that the "non-aligned" were so more rhetorically than substantively. Large sections of the NAM, including its largest member in India, were actively subsidised and supported by the USSR, and tailored their own international positions accordingly in image if not in substance. Similarly, the governments of Southeast Asia found it advantageous domestically and amongst themselves to proclaim their independence from external dependencies, even as they all by their actions acknowledged their need for foreign assistance and guarantees of support. Whitlam's conspicuous reduction of Australian military forces based in Malaysia and Singapore played well to the left-wing galleries at home, but not so well where it mattered - in Asia. Cultivation of Indonesia brought few real benefits, given the mutual antipathy of their political cultures and the continuing suspicion that Australia's public reassurances to the US really meant that it was still a tool of the west and thus, in the paranoiac consciousness of Southeast Asian politics, devoted to keeping the Asians in their place. Australia's past record in this respect did not help; nor did its protectionist trade policies.

Most significantly, the government was doing a good job of alienating the very middle class voters who had brought it to power in 1972, and along with them, a good deal of the moneyed establishment that had grown simply fed up with the old order. The durability of any of the changes being so precipitately wrought in Australian foreign policy, and in society as a whole, had to be questionable. The Liberal and Country parties simply refused to believe they were out of government, and mounted a tendentious, carping opposition to Labor the like of which had hardly been seen before or since. After forcing Labor to a premature election in early 1974 by repeatedly stalling legislation in the Senate, the defeated Liberal party leader (Billy Snedden, who was regarded as a decent man) observed<sup>1</sup> that winning an election did not necessarily mean a mandate to govern. Snedden, to keep his position, had succumbed to the demands of a parliamentary rabble.

The tenor of the opposition's campaign to regain its "rightful" position in government was that everything Labour did was bad, and the way of the future was to go back to the past. Aided by the continuing indiscipline of the Labor Ministry, the unwholesomely high political profile being taken by the Unions<sup>2</sup>, and growing popular despair at the thickening tarnish covering

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1. This based upon my recollection of a televised impromptu interview. Snedden was deposed in March 1975 by Malcolm (life wasn't meant to be easy) Fraser.

2. Under the leadership of one Robert James Lee Hawke. The name may be familiar.



the bright promise of less than three years before<sup>1</sup>, Labor was doomed to electoral defeat. The underhand manner in which it was brought about, however, caused much dark muttering for years afterward of a plot orchestrated between the opposition, the Governor General and the CIA. Some still worship at this altar.

#### **Postscript: Too Much Too Soon**

The single greatest failure of the Whitlam Government in foreign policy, and especially in its relationship with the United States, undoubtedly was the political immaturity of its ministry. They may have been virtuosos in the dark corridors of domestic Labor Party faction-fighting, but internationally they were babes in the woods. Most had no idea that what was emotionally satisfying to them personally, or to the ideologically 'correct' cliques of constituency parties and vocal pressure groups, was viewed abroad with suspicion, alarm, or contempt. Some, like Whitlam himself and his successor as Foreign Minister, Don Willessee, knew the world was changing fast and that Australia had to change with it. What they did not appreciate, or simply could not see through the fog of 23 years' political frustration, was that the United States too was now working for this change. Not always as they might have wished,

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1. The government's amateurish efforts to raise loans of Arab "oil money", and its equally inept efforts to protest its competence, caused considerable dismay, regardless of the mud-slinging tactics used by the opposition to exploit the matter for political gain. Inflation had rocketed to nearly 15% per annum, unemployment was rising, and the world economy as a whole seemed to be suffering "stagflation". See Russell Ward, Australia Since the Coming of Man, New York, St Martin's Press, 1987. pp229-30.

perhaps, but nonetheless it was and President Nixon, that much-maligned man of the right, was one of the principal agents for change.

He was trying to reduce the scope of American entanglements worldwide. This reflected both economic necessity and Nixon's belief that unending confrontation between the superpowers was as futile as, potentially, it was lethal. Capitalism was buckling under the pressure.<sup>1</sup> So were its adversaries, although the signs were not so obvious then. The Nixon Doctrine, announced as far back as 1969, had made clear what the direction of future American policy would be, as had Nixon's opening of a more normal relationship with China and his pursuit of detente with the Soviet bloc. He was supported in this by the *Ostpolitik* of Germany and France, even if each had its own good reasons for courting Soviet goodwill. There would have been more benefit working, quietly, with America, than vocally and superficially, against it. Whitlam, eager to reverse the *image* created by his predecessors, lost his point by using the same tactics: altering the image and not the substance of Australian foreign policy.

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1. It should not be forgotten that Nixon had administered his own "shocks" to the world system; ending the ready convertibility for gold of the US Dollar, and imposing a 10% surcharge on US imports. This in addition to his sudden announcement of his China initiative. And all done in 1971. In 1972 he had commenced the process of detente with the USSR and coined the term "linkage"; of economic-technological favour from the USA in return for 'good' behaviour, politically, from the USSR. This last ought to say something to those dreamers in Australia who would have us believe that the economic relationship with a country can be divorced from other areas of the relationship. as should the development of American and European relationships with the Arab nations and Israel since the first "oil shocks" imposed at around the same time.

The events and aftermath of the Vietnam involvement undoubtedly helped shape Labor's attitudes. It had been vilified and arguably kept out of office mainly due to its opposition to Australian involvement. Its case had been well-reasoned but poorly presented, and the message overwhelmed by Conservative scare mongering. Over a time, Labor had gone from reason to raw emotion on the subject, and its actions upon first taking office were ill-executed even if purely conceived. As did the United States, it over-reacted to an ill-starred overseas excursion; but how different it all from was the "glory" of ANZAC Cove and being "over there".

The big difference, which Labor did not see, was that the United States could quite properly choose to disengage from, or not become embroiled in once more, conflicts in various parts of the world. But South-East Asia was still and always would be on Australia's doorstep. It could not simply emulate both American revulsion and the consequential actions of its government. Australia's situation was not that of "the west" writ small. It was "writ" entirely differently; but Australia seemed not to grasp this. It also overlooked, conveniently, the fact that the US still kept large forces in the Philippines, Korea and Japan; and Labor was in large part still relying upon American engagement in East Asia as its guarantee of security if its own

'ten year rule' proved as foolish as Winston Churchill's.\* In addition, the United States had not helped trans-Pacific relations by its initial stubborn refusal to make even a cosmetic concession to Australia over supervision of its communications and intelligence-gathering facilities there. Both the US and the Australian governments allowed rumour and innuendo to supplant rational discussion on the subject, which deteriorated into a farce of wild public accusation followed by obscurantist official denial.

In the wider context of international relations, both sides misread the changing environment. The US was still looking at things in a cold war context, for all that it was attempting to ameliorate the effects of that conflict of wills and propaganda. And in 1973 it was involved in a succession of events which Walter LaFeber has described as "detente's turnaround"<sup>1</sup>. US relations with, and its attitude toward, the Third World, approached their nadir<sup>2</sup>. Labour overestimated the ease with which

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\* It is hard to believe, given his Cassandra-like performance in the 1930s, that Churchill was the first proponent of this idea. But as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the early 1920s, he was the one who proposed it.

1. The American Age, pp619-39.

2. The 'crippler' for Nixon-Kissinger, as with past and future administrations, was fear of the new; they could not admit their perceptions on which they had acted were based mostly in domestic propaganda (that all nations engage in) to convince themselves they were the world's most wonderful people; those not under American control would act in "un-American" ways. Nor could they face the fact that the yielding of coercive power meant having to work harder and along more complex paths to sustain or improve American influence. As Robert Dallek says of Nixon (perhaps the most pragmatic, internationally, of modern American Presidents): "He believed sincerely in this principle of autonomy or self-



a white nation with a long history of racial supremacist policy, and scant real links to the bulk of the emergent nations, could make an international volte face into the ranks of the third world, whilst insisting on its strong ties to the bastions of the old world - of which America had become part. Neither nation gave sufficient credence to the determination of the majority of nations in Asia and the Indian Ocean to maintain and strengthen the sovereignty they only recently had won. Both were still inclined to view nations such as India and Indonesia more as clients of one or other of the world's major blocs, although Australia less so than the US. But the Australian government never successfully explained to its own public why it had a more optimistic view of, say, India's stance in its region than did the US. It contented itself with criticism of America rather than cogent articulation of its own point of view. Had it stayed more with the latter course, it may have gained more respect and acceptance in the developing world and in Washington both.

ANZUS was a major stumbling block throughout. Whitlam was mesmerised by it, his pronouncements notwithstanding. As T.B. Millar observed<sup>1</sup>, it is likely that Whitlam and his colleagues did not feel that they would need to invoke it, at least during

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determination for nations, But it also frightened him; the risks of true diversity were just too great. ... Nixon could not let go of concentrated power and organised togetherness in his time. Indeed, the pattern was to preach autonomy and then find reasons why it could not work." Sounds like Australians defending ANZUS.

1. Australia in Peace and War, p407.

their time in power; giving them carte blanche to 'stick it' to America at will. If this was so they should have said it plainly. But they were not willing to genuinely tackle the unpleasant task of deciding what the nation had to do on its own account to ensure its future security and prosperity. The inherent contradictions of Labor's position only undermined its credibility as an expression of independent national policy-making. Australia was still 'wedded to the west' psychologically and materially. This was plain to all of Asia, which still regarded Australia as a last bastion of the white world whose presence could be tolerated but need not be welcomed - as was the case with the larger whole.

Labor further contradicted itself by its odd actions vis a vis Britain, whose Governor General put Whitlam in his political coffin in 1975 (an action, it was pointed out, that the British Queen would not have dared take in her own sceptered isle). It was Whitlam, to the confusion of many in a period of heightened nationalism (for all that its expression was often boorish and chauvinistic), who formally asked Queen Elizabeth to accept the formal title of Queen of Australia. The legal nicety of this move, which was supposed to end the notion of Australia's being a Dominion of the United Kingdom, as opposed to a sovereign nation with its own (absentee) sovereign, was lost on both the Australian public and one presumes, all those abroad who even took note of the event. Outwardly, it only confirmed Australian subservience to the British crown.

It must have puzzled America's Ambassador, who was not unsympathetic to Whitlam's desire to more forcefully assert Australian distinctiveness from the mainstream of the geographically distant 'west'. Green's speech to the Asia Society in New York, in March 1975<sup>1</sup>, reflects the optimism of a man who had worked hard with Whitlam to hold the relationship together despite the many strains imposed by both their governments, and sometimes by Whitlam himself, whose "frank" speeches managed to extol American virtues whilst simultaneously describing a picture of America that looked like the portrait of Dorian Gray. Green claimed that "relations are as healthy as they have been in a long time." Views in both capitals had undergone a "maturation process", he said, implying that they were overcoming "this danger in our relations ... of taking each other for granted, of assuming and presuming too much." He also hit unerringly on another reason - the perpetual one: "with less and less of Australia's GNP going to defence" Australia needed, he believed, to preserve its defence "lifeline" to the US. But this was not necessarily so; only if one believed in common jeopardy. Which implied common interest, and a common source of threat.

The Ambassador went on to virtually repeat Admiral Sperry's warning to Deakin of almost 70 years before, that expressions of

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1. In Barclay & Siracusa, pp112-4. Green was well-respected on both sides of politics, and his departure, much regretted. A few more men of his calibre may have done much to develop a genuine regard between the two countries, and cut down on the usual exchange of platitudes which, like the Chinese meal of once popular myth, leave one afterward still wanting something more substantial.

mutual regard were no basis for a lasting relationship, which "cannot be built on the shifting sands of sentiment". He reviewed areas of divergence of approach, and pointed to some regional and global issues where he saw Australia and the United States as "having so much in common." But the truth of the matter was that relations were still strained, and likely to remain so for some time, if only because of the Australians' penchant for "thinking out loud" on international affairs, and the Americans' preference for presenting their associates with the *fait accompli*. Things were certainly getting bad when the Soviet magazine *International Affairs* could refer in laudatory terms to "Australia's transition to a more active and independent foreign policy ... accelerated by the coming to power ... of the Labour Government"<sup>1</sup>.

Whitlam and Ambassador Green both had tried hard to preserve at least the illusion of a cordial working relationship between their two governments, but such there was not. Whitlam had wanted to have his cake and eat it; diplomatic relations choked on it. The US undoubtedly was relieved to be on more familiar ground when Malcolm Fraser and his inaptly named Liberals returned to their "rightful" place on the treasury benches. But the change brought few practical benefits, apart from Fraser's willingness to embrace once more the cold war rhetoric of his political ancestors.

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1. Barclay & Siracusa, pp122-6.



**"CERTAIN CORRECTIVES": FRASER, 1976-83**

International Affairs' correspondent noted that in its dying years, the previous Conservative government had begun to "introduce certain correctives in the country's foreign policy, with account taken of the national interests and the real situation in the world." Though it entered in a veritable blaze of pro-Americanism the Fraser Government did not undo many of its forebears' nor Labor's "correctives", and relations were more let stand than actively promoted. Even worship of the venerated ANZUS slipped into perfunctory attendance at annual meetings, where on at least one occasion the talk seems to have been more about beef export quotas than defence. Even this odd fact illuminates the primary value of the association as perceived by then in Australia; the expectation of economic benefit in return for its stalwart (verbal) adherence to the alliance with America.

After the usual "new broom for defence" White Paper released in 1976, which plugged the old theme of greater self-reliance, by 1978 defence spending had slid back to the post-Vietnam low, under Labor, of roughly 2.5% of GNP.<sup>1</sup> Australia's Foreign Service, rightly described as the country's "first line of defence", endured administrative reviews and staff and budget

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1. This is lower than the figures quoted at the time. The difference lies in the gap between budgeted outlay and actual expenditure. My reference for the quoted figure is the 1987 White Paper, The Defence of Australia, 1987, p100.

cuts.<sup>1</sup> Fraser introduced a measure known as "world parity pricing" for domestically produced oil, and squandered the dividend on "middle class welfare" expenditure rather than funding productive assets or reducing federal debt. He clung to protectionism which generated a storm of derision from the ASEAN countries, even as Australia proclaimed its wish for a closer relationship.<sup>2</sup> By the time he was ejected in 1983, it had become a common criticism of the stern-visaged and tough talking Fraser that he was just that - all front. Action seldom matched the words of the Fraser government, which did poorly in relations with Southeast Asia and in its own special way also succeeded in aggravating the Americans.

Fraser visited President Carter in 1978 (the year of the beef), and was welcomed by the President as his good friend John; which was Fraser's first name. But it seemed strange to interested Australians that the President of the USA should be so poorly briefed; what did it say about the regard in which their country was held? Carter gurgled a few trite, standard, "common heritage" phrases, and that was that. What else was there to say? The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, China's not so successful riposte, and later in 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, all breathed new life into the defence relationship, although Australia abstained from the US' unilateral trade embargo on the

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1. P.J.Boyce, "The Foreign Policy Process", Independence and Alliance: Australia in World Affairs, 1976-80, pp14-15.

2. See: J.R. Angel, "Australia and Southeast Asia", Independence and Alliance, pp223-244.

USSR and, eventually, from the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics as well.

The ANZUS Council of Foreign Ministers, however, still had managed to have an "emergency meeting" in late February 1980; the "Pacific Pact" was now used to provide the rationale for heightened Australian naval activity in the Indian Ocean<sup>1</sup> - and for heightened US military activity on, over and around Australian territory. Not much else changed, and Australia (sensibly) declined an American suggestion that it commit units to the Rapid Deployment Force. The Australian naval forces that operated in the Indian Ocean had limited contact with US and other western forces. This was quite sensible too: Australia was still getting beaten regionally with the "western lackey" club, and was trying to foster economic and diplomatic relations with countries in the Gulf and with India. New Delhi made it quite clear that visits by Australian warships would not be welcomed if they were acting in effect as part of a western naval task force in the region. Fraser was sensitive to these views, yet he still offered the US an option to home-port warships at the newly opened naval base just south of Fremantle, in Western Australia.

This action probably was just a sop to a venal state government's desire to fleece American sailors on a steadier  
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1. Just what this was supposed to demonstrate is not clear; the principal benefit for Australia seems to have lain in the regular calls subsequently made to Mombasa by units of the RAN, which were well received and provided a useful complement to Fraser's own interest in settling the difficulties in Zimbabwe and Namibia; besides acting as some indirect evidence of Australian support for an end to apartheid in South Africa.

basis.\* It held no attraction to the US Chief of Naval Operations, for purely naval reasons<sup>1</sup>. But US marines and naval aircraft did make use of the western Australian coast for training exercises, and B52 bombers were staged through Darwin for Indian Ocean "surveillance" flights and later for low level flying training over the northern Australian hinterland. It was all pretty marginal stuff, and the Australian Government, satisfied that the US was doing whatever it was that made it happy in the Indian Ocean, offered no more. It was more or less in the position that Australia occupied near the end of the Second World War - providing leave, recreation, training and some logistic facilities, and no forces at the coal face. It has to be said though that the two nations took more widely divergent views of developments in the Indian Ocean over time, and Australia had been spared the Iranian troubles of the Great Satan.

Australian non-response to the issue of a Multi-National Peace-Keeping Force (MNF) to oversee the practical implementation  
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\* I was on the staff of the recruit training establishment, HMAS Leeuwin, in 1978-9. I well remember the press heralding visits by USN carrier groups to Fremantle in these sorts of terms: "7,000 American sailors will visit Fremantle from [whenever to whenever]. They are expected to spend \$5 million during their stay." No-one gave two hoots what they had been doing, or why. Some years later, when I was operating out of Darwin, I can recall that there was a similar desire for American warships to be home-ported there, based upon hopes of stimulus to the local economy; but the idea made no sense, strategically, whatsoever.

1. Admiral Hayward, in testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, observed that Subic Bay is "the same distance from our Indian Ocean op area [the Arabian Sea] as Perth ... so you need not make a big investment in Perth when you have got a pretty substantial capability at the same distance away." Cited by Barclay, Friends in High Places, p205.



of President Carter's most luminous achievement, the Camp David Accords, was a different matter. Thanks to its scrupulously observed (albeit self-interested) policy of "even-handedness" in the Arab-Israeli disputes, and its position as a democratic middle power with at least an early history of support for international mediation of disputes, Australia was a logical candidate to contribute to such a force. It studiously avoided commitment: "Fraser was as determined to be last in the queue for Sinai as Spender had been to be first in the queue in Korea."<sup>1</sup> And he was last. Australia still participated in the end, but in a small way, and without reaping the rewards diplomatically and perhaps then economically that it might have. Its vacillation could hardly have impressed the US, and probably (and more importantly) few others as well.

Perhaps Fraser was trying a bit too hard to avoid being accused of simply following the US around the world again, and there would have been some criticism to this effect for sure. He would not have thanked his parliamentary colleague, former Prime Minister William McMahon, for putting to him in the House a question on the subject which inferred that participation in the MNF was required by virtue of "our special relationship with the United States; the need to strengthen the bonds that keep the two nations together, including recognition of our obligations under ANZUS". It was an extraordinarily inept way for McMahon to raise the subject of participation, especially as he prefaced these  
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1. Barclay, p207.

remarks with talk of the need for Australia "as one of the real leaders in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations area"<sup>1</sup> to lead the way in volunteering its participation in the Sinai MNF.

It was no form of leadership to be acting simply out of obligation to the United States, as McMahon should well have known, and it was altogether the wrong context for talk of ANZUS obligation especially. McMahon had put Fraser in a position where he would be damned if he did and damned if he didn't - and he was, both ways. This may have been what McMahon wanted; there was no love lost between the two. If so, it was yet another of those lamentably frequent instances where Australian domestic politicking was allowed to take precedence over the wider national interest, damaging its image both in the region and in the world at large.

Fraser at least shored up Australia's image by taking the lead in negotiating an end to the Smith regime in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and providing Australians as part of the monitoring group overseeing the transfer of power from the white minority to a majority government headed by former "freedom fighter" Robert Mugabe. Unusually for people of his political stripe, Fraser demonstrated a genuine commitment to oppose racialism in all its forms, wherever found, and he was a strong opponent of Apartheid in South Africa. He supported independence for Namibia, which had

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1. Barclay, p207. This must have gone down well in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur!

been under South African suzerainty since 1919, when Smuts (assisted by Hughes) had gained the League of Nations Mandate for the former German territory of Southwest Africa. In both matters his position did not differ significantly from that adopted by Whitlam. It had become part of 'mainstream' Australian foreign policy. So had Fraser's policy of unreserved acceptance of Vietnamese 'boat people' as immigrants. Australia accepted over 110,000 refugees after 1975, and it really was Fraser who 'got the ball rolling' on this policy which has since been adhered to.

Fraser's humanitarianism may have been what eventually brought him undone. He was still widely hated for his tactics in gaining power in 1975; and despite his tough talk, had not done what he promised, which was to administer a shock to the Australian system and kick it out of its complacency. In 1982, Australia entered another of its recurring economic slumps (due again largely to drought and collapsing mineral prices), and inflation and unemployment rose in tandem. By this time, the once-promised 7% annual growth in the defence budget was but a fond memory. Australia's good intentions had gone to seed once more.

#### **THE DROVER'S DOG: HAWKE, 1983-91**

By the time Fraser brought on his own political demise in 1983, by a fatally mistimed early General Election, "morning in America" showed many signs of taking the world on a long day's

journey into night. Though President Reagan was proving highly successful in restoring America's faith in itself, he was making a lot of other people nervous. This was a time when there was much talk of the Soviet Union making the most of a closing "window of opportunity" to exercise the supposed massive military advantage it reputedly enjoyed, according to a (purportedly) gloomy CIA<sup>1</sup> and a gleeful Pentagon, resurgent defence industries and a stern-faced Administration. Two bellicose geriatrics glowered at each other over their respective nuclear arsenals, and people were reading books with titles like *The Third World War*, 1985.<sup>2</sup>

The incoming Labour Government of former Trade Union boss Robert James Lee Hawke<sup>3</sup> was in something of a bind; many of its

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1. Which had nonetheless, it seems, correctly appreciated that the Soviet economy was sinking fast.

2. In 1982, Professor T.B. Millar (hardly a political radical), wrote: "We [in Australia] should be troubled by the Reagan administration's threshing around for a foreign policy based on strength without subtlety, which is not much better than subtlety without strength and may be even more dangerous...". Six years later, Desmond Ball would write: "Many aspects of recent developments in US warfighting plans and capabilities are profoundly disturbing" - he was referring to what seemed a philosophical shift within the US Strategic Planning establishment from 'deterrence' through mutually assured destruction, to 'warfighting' - a concept of using nuclear weapons tactically, to win battles. See: Australian Defence Policy For the 1980s, p17; and Australia and the World, pp81-3. It seems this was the only conceivable 'logical' response to Soviet doctrine, which already embraced nuclear 'warfighting'.

3. Hawke had taken over the Labor Party leadership just prior to the election, supplanting the more ideologically sound but (so deemed the party fixers) less electorally attractive Bill Hayden, who went on to be Minister for Foreign Affairs and then Governor General (in 1988). Hayden remarked, justifiably given an economic slump and rising unemployment, besides general public disenchantment with Fraser and his team that the election of 5



supporters at the local party level were also strong advocates of "anti-nuclearism". This extended from wanting to ban uranium mining\* to banning visits by nuclear powered or armed ships and aircraft. There was more vocal (though still by no means a preponderance of) support for declaring Australia a neutral or non-aligned country, and for joining in with a renewed call for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone<sup>1</sup>.

The government itself it was pledged to a 'Nuclear Free' South Pacific and divided on the question of uranium mining. One of its first acts was to appoint an "Ambassador for Disarmament" to the United Nations. The "Joint facilities" operated by the

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March 1983 could have been won by "the drover's dog". See Russell Ward, Australia Since the Coming of Man, p238. (Be warned that the author himself admits this is a highly ideologically biased account of Australian history. But the bias is in the interpretation of fact; the facts themselves are undistorted.)

\* A common graffito was "Ban Uranium"; this appeal to revise the periodic table of the elements went unheard, it seems, by She who controls the cosmos.

1. Though it should be appreciated that the SPNFZ idea was motivated as much by dislike and fear of French Nuclear testing at Mururoa atoll (in French Polynesia, centred upon Tahiti), as by any other consideration. And there was the anti-colonial factor to consider as well, with New Caledonia being considered a 'way-station' for forces en route to Polynesia; and with Polynesia itself becoming ever more dependent upon the financial largesse accompanying the testing programme. In the twenty years since 1966, there were 81 nuclear tests, both above and (after 1975) below ground. By 1985, in Polynesia "exports covered 6% of imports". See: Mort Rosenblum, Mission to Civilize: The French Way, New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1986. p57 and Chapter 16. The United States' unwavering support for France and French interests, in the service of the US' deterrent posture in the North Atlantic, did not go un-noticed; except, perhaps, in France.

United States in Australia made the country a certain target, it was widely believed, in the event of war between the nuclear superpowers, in which Australia otherwise had little need to become involved<sup>1</sup>. What price ANZUS, then?

### "Concerned to do Nothing"

The Prime Minister hastened to plight his troth to Uncle Sam: "we are concerned to do nothing to endanger our alliance with the United States" said he within two months of taking office<sup>2</sup>. US warships would not be asked "the question", nor would the B-52s still operating through the Northern Territory. Both were welcome to come and go as they pleased - unions willing. The latter had other ideas, as was made plain when the British aircraft carrier *Invincible* developed stern gland troubles and requested to enter the Garden Island Drydock that had been built in World War II mainly to meet the requirements of allied fleets. This time the Defence Minister asked "the question", to which the British Captain gave the standard answer - he could neither

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1. And according to the authors of the "Third World War", it scarcely was. In 1988, Professor Desmond Ball asserted that only one of the US facilities in Australia - the satellite ground station at Pine Gap - was essential for arms control verification and monitoring purposes. The remainder were becoming unnecessary, due to technical developments, for either war-fighting or arms-control purposes. Pine Gap, Ball considered "irreplaceable" for arms control verification; but this leaves open the need for continuing operation of others such as Nurrungar. See: Desmond Ball (ed.), Australia and the World, pp84-7.

2. Barclay, p208. In the same address, Hawke also expressed Australia's support for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, though specifically stating, as would perpetually be repeated to congenitally deaf members of the Reagan Administration, that Australia did not hold with restrictions upon transit or port calls of nuclear powered or armed vessels and aircraft.

confirm nor deny that his ship had nuclear weapons on board. Then you cannot dock, said the Minister. The *Invincible* went to Singapore, amid much scratching of heads by those who wondered what the government meant when it said that these restrictions would not apply in a "real emergency" - regardless of the fact that refusal of timely repair could itself eventuate in a "real emergency". It was a stupid position to be in. The Minister was replaced shortly afterwards; the Union leaders remained.

In the meantime, the Australian Defence Force seemed to be wallowing through a period of mental stagnation and bureaucratic impotence. This was as usual accompanied by severe inter-service backbiting and loud complaints over the unwarranted influence of Department of Defence civilian officials who constituted "the best-funded disarmament lobby in the country".\* Defence Minister Scholes had fulfilled his party's pre-election commitment to disposal of the nation's sole identifiable (to labour ideologues<sup>1</sup>) tool of expansionist militarism in the ageing  
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\* It was described to me thus by a senior officer who declared that Canberra was the scene of the "real war" - between servicemen and bureaucrats. And it certainly seemed that way for a while.

1. Another view with its roots in the 1920s, perhaps earlier. Labor then "consistently opposed any Australian [purchase of] cruisers". Their long range made cruisers "offensive" rather than "defensive" it argued; besides the fact that they could be integrated into distant campaigns waged by Britain. Labor would have done better to question the underlying policy of regarding the RAN as part of a global Imperial Navy, which caused, over time, increasingly unbalanced development of the RAN. It came increasingly to be seen as a unit meant simply to dovetail into larger British or other allied forces. This was far from the vision of 1911. Also by 1920, "the advocacy of air force and submarines became the central point of Labor defence plans." See: Hasluck, The Government and the People, p23.



carrier Melbourne, which was not to be replaced nor some substitute naval capability found. The Navy would take a manpower cut equivalent to her Ship's Company and air group. At its senior levels, the Navy was shocked into something close to paralysis; the Air Force indulged itself by claiming to be the panacea for all defence needs; and the Army simply said that everything it had was essential to maintain the right base for 'general mobilisation' against an invasion threat that sounded suspiciously like the Yellow Peril of old. The forces seemed inadequate for independent 'conventional' operations in support of purely national goals, and irrelevant to conduct of global (inevitably, nuclear) war. National security goals were the subject of much disagreement, but little rational debate. Most arguments revolved endlessly around the stark alternatives, neither of them satisfactory, of continental defence (isolationism) or the need to support the Western Alliance (presumed to mean 'forward defence', as practised by Menzies.). Debate on force structure focussed on endless, ill informed and wholly erroneous comparison between the various merits of different force elements, conducted along lines that would have been familiar to the defence chiefs and bureaucrats of the inter-war period. There was but little talk of the underlying weakness in the economy, and almost none of broadening the framework of Australia's diplomatic contacts.

Some revolutionary thinking was called for, but nothing much arose: all could agree, though, that changing anything at all would be difficult and demanding; and should therefore be



avoided if possible. The drift, dogmatic pronouncements and general inactivity continued, until the whole question of defence policy and military alliances was given a welcome boost by the unwelcome actions of a newly elected Labour Government in New Zealand.

### **"Brave Little New Zealand"**

Within months of gaining office, New Zealand's government under Prime Minister David Lange managed to stand ANZUS on its ear, by the simple expedient of carrying out its pre-election policy of denying entry to nuclear powered or armed vessels and aircraft. "The question" would be asked for every proposed visit. "The Answer" (by now reduced for convenience, so regularly was it reiterated, to NCND) would not be accepted: it had to be either yes or no. The US was outraged, the Australian government cringed. New Zealand's action added grist to the quite considerable mill of Australia's own herd of anti-nuclear zealots. A 'single-issue' political party (the Nuclear Disarmament Party), was formed to advance the cause, and got two senators elected on the strength of it.\*. Of course the two

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\* It should be understood that election to the Senate in Australia is decided on a proportional-preferential basis. Each state has allocated to it ten senate seats; the Territories, two each. To be elected, each candidate has to secure a "quota" of votes, which are allocated on a preferential basis. i.e., a successful candidate in a half-senate election typically would require about 14% of the vote to secure a seat, allowing that some candidates will surpass this figure on the primary vote. The votes of candidates who secure a quota on the primary vote are obviously not redistributed as preferences to other candidates. The power of single issue parties and other pressure groups stems largely from the ability to influence the allocation of

nation's circumstances could hardly have been more different. But perhaps New Zealand had a more finely developed sense of the "art of the possible" than did Australia. It had clung more tightly to the Imperial skirts than its larger neighbour, and had suffered correspondingly greater economic pain, and moral outrage, when Britain deserted it for the Common Market. Yet it had kept its

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preferences, which make the difference between winning and losing for many a candidate of a mainstream party if he is placed low on his party's ticket. An a couple of minority senators can often hold the balance of power in the senate. They rarely, for obvious reasons, get people into the House of representatives, where a simple majority (after preferences) is required to gain a seat. But by 'directing' preferences from the faithful, can still have a major influence in the result.

semi-Battalion of troops in Singapore even as Australia decided to take its own out; and they were still there in 1984\*.

Over time New Zealand had come to reflect perhaps more deeply on the costs and benefits of what it was doing in the military as well as in other fields affecting its ultimate security. It was geographically isolated, and of no great moment in the world contest for territorial dominion or influence. It offered no glittering prizes in resources; unless you had a lust for sheep and their products. There was no particular reason for it to be targeted in the event of superpower conflict, which would be waged, if at all, almost exclusively in the northern hemisphere. Being "nuclear free" was an 'easy' domestic political issue: much to gain in kudos, at little practical risk. All that was at stake was the American 'nuclear guarantee' implied by ANZUS: and what, realistically, did that matter?

The US pronounced - it was solidarity that mattered; standing together against the common foe. This was pretty ridiculous too, from a solely national perspective. New Zealand had no reason to embrace Russia or Russians<sup>1</sup> - who were about as far removed ethnically and ethically as they were geographically from New Zealand. Well, said the US, you might want us for  
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\* But they are gone now, though their departure was by no means sudden. It did not happen until 1989-90, and a residual presence is still maintained.

1. And Lange went out of his way to warn the Russians, publicly, against trying to exploit his action by willful misinterpretation of its import and implications. See: Camilleri, The Australia, United States, New Zealand Alliance: Regional Strategy in the Nuclear Age, p137.

something else; and the New Zealand service chiefs joined in. The government decided that militarily, there was not too much that it could think of; more importantly, New Zealand public opinion was firmly behind a "nuclear free" New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> If ANZUS could be salvaged, well and good; if not, so be it. This appalled the Australian government; it was being upstaged by "brave little New Zealand", whose own unique security circumstances were falsely being made analogous to Australia's by the local anti-nuclear/anti-America lobby.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, pertinent questions were raised, even as Hawke and his ministers strove to reduce the danger posed to the alliance by both New Zealand's hardening stance and the strongly adverse reaction of the senior partner. The main US concern was global, not regional. Other 'waverers' might emulate New

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1. Yet the majority remained in favour of maintaining the Alliance. Why? I can only surmise, out of habit; both New Zealand and Australia were accustomed to believe that an external alliance with a Great Power was part and parcel of the national heritage, and by inference a necessity.

2. Perhaps what most turned up the heat, though, on both sides of the Tasman, was the sinking of the Greenpeace vessel "Rainbow Warrior" in Auckland harbour on 10 July 1985. It was to be 'flagship' for a protest flotilla sailing to French Polynesia. Two French agents were captured by police and later convicted of the sabotage, in which one crew-member lost his life. France was unrepentant, as evidenced by a statement of the President himself: "No one can argue that France should diminish its surveillance of the atolls and renounce its tests on the strength of an act that does not morally engage our country." What can one say? For an account of the circumstances and the French domestic debate, see: Rosenblum, Mission to Civilize, pp321-39.



Zealand's action<sup>1</sup>, should New Zealand be seen to "get away with it". Lange insisted there was nothing to prevent the maintenance of a "conventional" military relationship; it was just that New Zealand had neither need nor desire for a nuclear dimension to be added to its defences.<sup>2</sup> The US responded with a series of military-intelligence "sanctions" against New Zealand, coupled with thinly veiled threats that these might be broadened into economic sanctions too. Australian activists exulted - it was obvious that New Zealand was being backed into a diplomatic corner from which it could not retreat, but would continue to snarl and spit\* Australia's Prime Minister wavered, and caved in to domestic complaints about making airfields available to US aircraft that were going to monitor an MX missile test shot, that

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1. As expressed by Deputy assistant Secretary of Defence James Kelly in testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Asia and the Pacific in March 1985: "The potential spread of access denials to other countries with very active anti-nuclear factions is of very serious concern." Quoted in Camilleri, p142.

2. There was something in this, but also something to the American argument that navies and armed forces generally were not infinitely divisible in form and function. Lange wanted his bread buttered on both sides; it was an impossible position to take. He would have been better advised to take the big leap and say he didn't need the Alliance as it had come to be understood. But like Whitlam, he obviously figured this was too much for the public to digest in one swallow. The American position was (and had to be) based upon its global outlook and the need to maintain cohesion in NATO, many of whose members also had to deal with (or had within their governments) very sizeable anti-nuclear constituencies.

\* I well remember speaking with a senior New Zealand Navy officer at the depth of the dispute. He said that he (and his countrymen) were fed up with being banged over the head with accusations of treachery and threats of economic and diplomatic excommunication. And they had responded accordingly, by taking pride in their stance and refusing to be bullied.

would splash down hundreds of miles from Australian territory. It was a humiliating moment.

Hawke was walking a tightrope. The threat of economic sanctions against New Zealand was of grave concern at home, where Australia had been struggling with diminishing success to maintain, let alone increase, a share of the United States market for its primary products, chiefly beef and sugar, in the face of increasing US protectionism and steadily reducing foreign quotas<sup>1</sup>. Also of concern was the possibility of being cut off from US logistic support in particular, upon which the Navy and Air Force were especially dependent.\* The intelligence had always to be taken with a grain or two of salt, but the US' huge technical resources made access to even a part of the output irresistible.

Australia tried to play the intermediary role, and like most middlemen found itself pushed from pillar to post, being accused  
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1. It is interesting that in the face of these noises from the United States, the Australian government was not prepared to try a 'reverse track' and pressure the Americans; it regularly insisted that US facilities in Australia were not "bargaining chips" to be used to extract more sensible agricultural policies from the United States.

\* In large part this was a direct consequence of cheese-paring budgets, which had caused the services to concentrate on capital equipment purchases to the detriment of ordnance and spare parts stockpiling. Administrative tangles on both sides added to the problem; "routine" orders for various items through the US Foreign Military Sales system sometimes seemed to take forever to be processed and fulfilled. The causes were varied; sometimes inefficiency, sometimes competing demands from the US armed forces, and from those of other allies. The RAN and RAAF also very much valued their access to the US' fully instrumented training facilities in the Philippines, Hawaii and the Continental United States.

by both sides of the argument of not adhering closely enough to their own preferred position. By mid-1986, all military and intelligence contact was suspended, as were official contacts at almost all levels. New Zealand opinion seemed to be headed toward almost total neutrality and disarmament. Australia strove to strengthen its bilateral links with New Zealand and the United States, at no small cost to itself.<sup>1</sup> And the new defence Minister, Mr Kim C. Beazley, paused frequently in public to drink at the ANZUS trough.

#### **After ANZUS - More ANZUS**

In mid-1985, when questioning of the relationship was approaching its height, Beazley gave a speech in which he attempted to answer the rhetorical question "After ANZUS?". His answer was succinct if unimaginative: "More ANZUS"<sup>2</sup>. But the relationship with the United States was again entering a contentious phase on broader issues.

Australia continued to take a more relaxed view of relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam than did the US, and advocated a more flexible approach to the Cambodian question than either the US or ASEAN. After lagging initially, it had been quicker to expand its relationship with China (but Sino-Russian relations were not really an inhibiting factor for Australia).

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1. Camilleri, pp142-7.

2. Kim C. Beazley, "After ANZUS: Australia's Future Security Arrangements." Australian Foreign Affairs Record, July 1985.



Australia was a vocal critic of US policies toward central America throughout the eight years of Ronald Reagan's presidency. Australia and ASEAN were both getting a bit weary, and wary, of the continued harping on "burden sharing" in the Pacific, where the US' "Maritime Strategy" and the concept of horizontal escalation were seen to be, along with the deliberately provocative actions of the USSR, the main cause of regional tensions. There was widespread concern that the US pressure on Japan to take up more of the burden of its own defence (against a threat generated chiefly by American extension to Asia of Europe's cold war) was a convenient cloak for Japanese rearmament<sup>1</sup> which eventually could result in another period of Japanese military-economic hegemony in East Asia; the more so because the US apparently conceived that Japan had to "share the burden" of economic assistance as well<sup>2</sup>. Insensitive behaviour

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1. See: Robert O. Tilman, Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond: ASEAN Perceptions of External Threats, Boulder CO, Westview, 1987. This is a very useful book, drawing on a wide range of interviews and 'local' printed sources. Tilman observed that "many misgivings about Japanese strategies, tactics and motives persist." (p120) Aside from fear of Japanese commercial domination, "every ASEAN state has some concern about Japanese rearmament" and they also expressed "concerns about the United States as a threat in one way or another. America is urging Japan to rearm without considering the latent security threat that Japan may pose to the ASEAN region." In addition, it was widely felt that "America behaves like a loose cannon on a rolling deck. It is powerful but not predictable, and [thus] a 'danger' even if it is not a 'threat'." (pp150-51) The consensus seemed to be (in 1986-7) that the United States would be a formidable enemy, but is a risky friend." (p140)

2. Richard Holbrook, former Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, now says of American pressure for Japanese rearmament: "From 1977-81 I participated in these efforts. The policy was misguided and pursued with far too much enthusiasm." It is good of him to admit it now (in a discreet footnote), but this hardly explains why the US thought it could ignore, and pour



by US fishermen in the South Pacific had angered regional governments into proposing fishery agreements with the USSR, but the US was very slow to either bring its fishermen to heel or to propose any constructive alternative which would generate some income for these cash-strapped micro-states.

The US seemed unwilling to exert any pressure on France to suspend its controversial nuclear testing programme at Mururoa Atoll (a source of irritation for over a decade), or to have France modify an increasingly intransigent policy towards decolonisation of New Caledonia.<sup>1</sup> In the latter case, the local 'liberation front' was known to be getting aid and comfort from the egregious Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, who had links with the government of Vanuatu as well. Australia had helped sponsor, and had ratified, the Treaty of Raratonga, which declared a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. This provoked outright hostility from senior echelons of the Reagan administration, although Australia,

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scorn upon, those who demurred at the time. It should give the ANZUS chorus in Australia something to think about as well. Strangely, Holbrook goes on to say "Washington was on sounder ground" in encouraging Japanese Overseas Development Aid (ODA) throughout the region; but nearly all that 'aid' was loans and 'tied' investment, adding to regional fears of a new Co-Prosperity Sphere. See: Richard Holbrook, "The Unequal Partnership", Foreign Affairs, vol.70 no.5, Winter 1991-92, p53.

1. The tension eased considerably with the departure of the Chirac Government and its replacement by the more conciliatory regime of Rocard. The new Premier, Edith Cresson, does not appear especially worried one way or the other, being naturally preoccupied with Europe and Japanese ants.

supported by New Zealand<sup>1</sup>, had gone to some pains to ensure that there was no formal commitment by any of the Treaty Signatories to restrict transit or port access.

The administration saw no virtue in the treaty. Later, Congressional hearings in examination of the issue of US accession to the protocols to the Treaty, produced a venomous outburst from former assistant Secretary Richard Perle:

I do not think that this is the kind of palliative that in the long run is going to deal with the anti-nuclear sentiment that exists in Australia. ... we are going to be subjected more or less continuously to an anti-nuclear test in a number of international forums, and that will give plenty of grist to Mr Hayden's mill for generating anti-American sentiment in Australia, which I have no doubt he takes great pleasure in doing and will continue to do at every opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Michael Hamel-Green, The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty: A Critical Assessment, Peace Research Centre Monograph No.8. Canberra, Australian National University, 1990.pp79-80. From examination of the negotiating stances of the two countries, Hamel-Green concludes that: "Australian government concern over [New Zealand's] anti-nuclear and ANZUS policies was one of the key factors that prompted the Raratonga Treaty. [Australia] sought to pre-empt any New Zealand Labour regional initiative that might have threatened US or Australian interests at the regional level ... [and it] successfully contain[ed] the spread of the 'nuclear allergy' to other countries in the region..."e also concludes that "New Zealand's vulnerability to potential economic pressure ... [and] its continuing ambivalent support for ANZUS [in government and in the community]", besides a now-heightened dependence upon Australia as a defence partner, all helped ensure its support for the Australian initiative. "New Zealand response represented a successful example of the Treaty's intended role as a measure to channel regional anti-nuclear responses in a pro-ANZUS direction..." Over to you, Mr Perle.

2. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, 100th Cong., 1st Sess., 9 June and 15 July 1987. Chairman Stephen Solarz observed that he had "always considered [Foreign Minister Hayden] "a friend of America". Perle's view was that Hayden was "not particularly well disposed toward any of our policies." Perle was probably right there; and

Through all of this, Beazley insisted then and later that ANZUS did not "distort Australia's defence priorities." They had been distorted, he claimed, by "our Imperial heritage"; the "ANZUS Treaty was not the cause". This was and is sheer sophistry. The culture of dependence was simply transferred from one relationship to another; and for a time oscillated between the two. The issue was not, as Beazley suggested, one of choice between "forward defence" and "continental defence"; it was between an independent or a subservient foreign policy and the will to carry it out. It was Australian governments' predilection for music without instruments (and also for, as Correlli Barnett termed them, Covenants Without Swords) that hobbled its diplomatic initiative and its regional acceptability.

Beazley was considerably closer the mark in pointing out that "an 'armed and neutral' Australia would require to spend more on defence and development generally". Here was the rub, although some things were rubbed rather more than others, to create a distorted picture. Australia would have to support, said Beazley, "massively increased expenditure on surveillance and

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Hayden was just one among many in the Western Pacific. Perle's was a typical "get on the team" reaction of the sort so many were tired of. Perle is in a way symbolic of what is now, hopefully, dying out of the American post-war ethos; the 'other-directed' person with an "unthinking faith in shared assumptions" and "preoccupied with group identity" and conformity to a propagandised view of "the norm" and the "organisation ethic". See: Robert Dallek, The American Style of Foreign Policy, Chapter 7, "Cold War Orthodoxy".



intelligence gathering capability".

But this seems a hollow claim when by the US' own admission, 95% of its efforts went toward monitoring the Soviet Union and its armed forces. Beazley hammered the money angle, but he seemed to be referring to an enemy which had yet to materialise, and perhaps never would\*. Or was he admitting that the alliance had generated the only major threat he claimed was feasible: subjugation and destruction by either of the two superpowers, or a massively rearmed regional nation? Thus: "The disastrous effects of a surprise attack would require that we harden the defences of all key elements of our capability, which would involve massive [again!] outlays on defence infrastructure and manpower." It appeared that Beazley felt that the alliance would permit him and his successors to oversee with equanimity the sudden destruction of Australia's limited 'key capability' elements, in the expectation that its charred chestnuts would again be hauled out of the fire.

It was the logic of 1939 - 42. But more than this, "in order to re-establish the supply capabilities for which we can presently rely upon the United States", Australia would have to "undertake huge expenditure on research, development and

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\* And one might reasonably expect Australia's overseas missions to provide the necessary intelligence with which to gauge both political intent and military 'generic' capabilities. Which would leave open only some technical questions regarding acquisition and performance data for specific systems. If it had this sort of information, what sort of "friend" would deny it in time of impending hostilities? And could it not mostly be got by national means in any case?



industrial infrastructure." Many observers might have felt that the latter was exactly what the country needed to overcome its now chronic economic problems and its deteriorating stature - never high - as a middle industrially developed nation.\* And there was no mention of the possibilities of collaborative development with nations in Southeast Asia or elsewhere. And Australia's logistic support agreements with the US invariably were - and are - subject to "the exigencies of war" and, echoing ANZUS itself, to each party's "national laws, regulations, and policies, and to case-by-case review and determination"<sup>1</sup> (my emphasis). Beazley was both innovative and open minded in many matters. But he too, it seemed, already had donned the ANZUS blinkers was just not interested in alternatives.

#### Discord With Indonesia

The most likely adversary, in almost any field, for Australia still was identified as Indonesia, and relations

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\* The relevant high technology and advanced engineering and design industries need not have been developed specifically for narrow, uneconomic application only to military hardware. Indeed, with the Australian government as their sole customer (as it is always envisaged to be), it would be like setting up a clothing factory in a (tropical) nudist colony. But there is no reason why Australia could not become a regional centre for manufacture, sales and service of just about anything from information systems to advanced aerospace technologies, not to mention slightly less glamorous things such as road-building machinery and railway rolling stock: if it got serious about developing its "vast potentialities". There is still far too much Parliamentary Inquiry and not enough parliamentary encouragement; the arguments 'against' always seem to outweigh the reasons 'for' any attempt to drag the nation into the modern world.

1. United States and Australia, Agreement Concerning Cooperation in Defense Logistic Support, 4 November 1989, Article II. In Burnett et. al., The ANZUS Documents, p203.

between the two were deteriorating rapidly. As in the 1950s, there was no significant response from the United States, at least in public. A large part of the Indonesian-Australian difficulty stemmed from long-standing, persistent complaints from the military-dominated authoritarian government of ex-General Suharto about Australian media bias amounting to interference in internal affairs. This included the broadcasts of Radio Australia, and domestic Australian coverage in the electronic and especially the print media. There was a good deal of antipathy in Australia still, and perhaps particularly within the media 'club', following what appeared to be the arbitrary execution of five Australian journalists in East Timor during the Indonesian invasion in 1975.

Nonetheless, the root of the matter, so far as the media were concerned, was persistent criticism of both the style and the substance of Indonesia's governing elite. Media coverage frequently touched on the raw nerves of suppression of internal dissent and of increasing official corruption. The dam burst with front-page publication in the Sydney Morning Herald of a story that highlighted the involvement of the Suharto family in

particular in corrupt and nepotistic business practices<sup>1</sup>. But there was much more to it than that.

Indonesia was clearly upset by many aspects of Australian policy, not least perhaps by the inference that it was Australia's most likely future enemy - something which Indonesian xenophobia and regional ambition did little to dispel however. Regardless of the temper of relations at any given time, Indonesia's geographical proximity would anyway oblige any Australian (or Indonesian) government to at least consider in its security planning the possibility of an adverse change in the political character of its neighbour. Australia's involvement in attempting to find a solution to the Cambodian problem upset Indonesia's foreign minister\*, who basically wanted all the

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1. Hamish McDonald, "Press War Continues", FEER, 24 April 1986, p18; and, "The Price of Freedom", FEER, 8 May 1986, pp44-5. The article, entitled "After Marcos, Now For The Suharto Millions", was published on 10 April 1986. Industry Minister Habibie was to visit Australia two days later, and immediately cancelled his trip and "refused even to transit Australia on his trip to New Zealand a few days later". The Australian press, except for the Jakarta bureau of the Australian Financial Review, had its licenses and entry permits revoked. On 22 April, Indonesia banned entry by Australian tourists; hundreds were 'turned around' on arrival at Bali's Denpasar airport. The ban was lifted the next day, but tempers rose. Also on 22 April, the Armed Forces newspaper, *Angkatan Bersentja* (AB) accused Australia of "attitudes to Indonesia ... marked by fear and racism." AB said that "As a nation descended from the white race, Australians [display an attitude] which we (the editors) take as arrogance, conceit and delusions of their ability to lead." See also: (unattrib.), "Overstepping the Mark", FEER, 8 May 1986, pp44-5.

\* Now retired, Mochtar Kusumaatjaja. He worked hard on a solution to the Cambodian problem, but his (and ASEAN's) position differed fundamentally from that of Australia, which was not prepared to recognise the Khmer Rouge-dominated Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) as the legitimate 'government in exile' of Cambodia. Australia, seeing the impossibility of either condoning the North Vietnamese invasion,

initiatives to come from - and all the credit to go to - his country. Australia's formal defence relationship with Malaysia and Singapore, and its refusal, post-Whitlam, to endorse Indonesia's cherished goal of a ZOPFAN and NWFZ in Southeast Asia also created friction. Indonesia consistently had rebuffed Australian attempts to gain, by varying means, something approaching full membership in ASEAN.<sup>1</sup>

Australia was regarded as a divisive influence - that is, its position often ran counter to Indonesian goals of establishing and articulating the positions it considered were best for Southeast Asia<sup>2</sup>. There was also an unresolved disputed seabed boundary between Australia and Timor, which with the discovery of oil in the Timor Sea (on the Australian Continental

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or of endorsing the murderous former regime, wanted the matter resolved through the United Nations; Indonesia's preference was for a 'regional solution'.

1. Millar, p411 and pp428-9.

2. C.P.F. Luhulima, "ASEAN-Australian Relations: Status of the Art", Indonesian Quarterly, vol.XIII, no.1, 1985.pp83-99. The author refers to Australia's "political and economic ambiguities which still colour its sense of loyalty" although its has "professed solidarity with Southeast Asia and particularly with ASEAN since the 1970s..." A clear exhortation to 'get on the team' - and fall in with Indonesian policy views. Luhulima concludes: "It is thus no wonder that ASEAN suspects that Australia ... keeps considering itself as an European enclave in a region of non-Europeans, that its real identity is with the West. This is very noticeable in economic policies [and] in its defence policies. Unless and until Australia is able to decide for itself that it is a Western Pacific nation, politically, economically and in the end, culturally, ASEAN-Australian relations will remain a function of Australia's ambiguity." I do not believe that regional views have undergone any significant change since this was written.



Shelf), the Indonesians were keen to have modified in their favour<sup>1</sup>. Finally, perhaps, the Indonesian hierarchy was just deciding to test the diplomatic water with the United States. President Reagan was scheduled to visit in 1986: whether or not the visit went ahead<sup>2</sup> after Indonesia's abrupt cessation of most normal intercourse and cooperation, and its harassment of Australian tourists, would perhaps give a good indication of where the US stood in relation to its "ally" to the South. Reagan's visit went ahead, and there was precious little comment about press freedom or anything else.<sup>3</sup> Overall, it seemed that

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1. Asnani Usman, "The Timor Gap in the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf Boundary Between Indonesia and Australia", Indonesian Quarterly, vol.XIV, no.3, July 1986. pp375-92. Seabed oil exploitation and fishing rights were the economic issues driving this dispute. It has since been partially resolved by an agreement for a "Joint Development Zone" in the Timor Sea; but the validity of this is under challenge internationally, based on continuing argument over the legal status of Indonesian rule in (former) Portuguese East Timor.

2. Although it would have been hard to cancel it, since it was not specifically a State Visit to Indonesia, but a Presidential appearance, on 1 May 1986, at the ASEAN Summit held in Bali. Reagan had previously cancelled a Southeast Asian tour in 1983. The visit was in any case expected to be marked by "symbolism, not substance". But since Suharto's attitudes to the press freedom paralleled at least some of his ASEAN colleagues' views, a very strong message would have been sent had the President cancelled. The President's own agenda, apart from promoting 'good feelings', was apparently to "draw attention ... to the growing Soviet presence in the Pacific" and to "remind ASEAN of the growing concern in the US over [its] mounting trade deficit [with ASEAN]." See: Nayan Chanda, "The Sunshine Scenario", FEER, 1 May 1986, pp32-3.

3. Richard Nations, "Symbols, Not Substance", FEER, 15 May 1986, pp46-7. There seemed to be no diplomatic gain on either side, and Suharto in particular did not seem to gain the boost that he had sought to give his image as regional statesman. US Secretary of State George Schultz, however, "went to some lengths in press briefings to applaud the improvement in the human rights climate under Suharto." Besides religious freedom (always guaranteed, being enshrined as one of the Indonesian Republic's Five

Australia had, as it has been before and since, used a something of a 'whipping boy', being for the nations of Southeast Asia a conveniently adjacent and not too powerful target for their generalised resentments of the "arrogance, conceit and delusions of their ability to lead" of all the "white race" of the West. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew told the National Press Club in Canberra that the press "had an obligation not to undermine their own national interests" with "insensitive" comment, and "used the row to develop a longstanding theme of his - that Australia will only grow up when it sees clearly that its future lies in Asia"<sup>1</sup>.

Lee's comments had been made before and his sentiments were shared by many Australians. Throughout the difficulties with staunchly anti-communist Indonesia, another question arose: how would America choose if the two antagonists came to blows? Would 'even-handedness' mean refusal of supply? It may be some time yet before we know what if any questions were officially asked, and what answers were given.

### **Straining the Bonds**

In the meantime, Australian relations with the US were growing tense over the question of trade, and especially over  
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Principles in 1945, and since then adhered to) and succour for refugees, Mr Schultz stated that Indonesia had become self-sufficient in rice production "and I think that's basically a great victory for human rights." A Soviet trade delegation arrived in Jakarta soon after.

1. "Overstepping the Mark", FEER, 8 May1986, pp44-5.

agriculture. As the Australian economy hit rock bottom (or so it was thought; worse came later), the US was cranking up its so-called Export Enhancement Programme (EEP), to the detriment of efficient farmers worldwide. Economic relations between the United States and its major ally, Japan, also were increasingly strained. Over the last few years, trade relations have proven to be the major bone of contention between the US and both its Pacific allies. At the same time, it became clear that the cold war was over and it was time to seek a "new world order".

But differences over what shape that order may take, and how it may best be achieved, also are sharpening. Change continues anyway, in Australia's environment and in the world - and some of the most significant changes involve the status, influence and future posture of Australia's big brother, the United States.

Although it was briefly seduced by the notion of a "unipolar moment" of unchallenged military power that would permit it to take charge of the affairs of the world, the United States is about to give up on Pax Americana, and, militarily, it is also on the way out of Asia. Despite the fond hopes expressed by the President and some of his Administration, the US military presence is decreasingly necessary as a "balance wheel" in Asia, and it is rapidly becoming a "fifth wheel", inhibiting rather than facilitating the development of regional solutions to long-standing problems.

The US says its continued military presence is essential to maintain stability in the western Pacific. But questions remain: where, when, how and for what reasons would the US intervene in a regional dispute over, say, the Spratly islands; or freedom of passage through the archipelagic straits; or a Chinese 'crackdown' in Hong Kong; or in a border clash between Malaysia and the Philippines. How does the United States, which has significant trade links with nearly every nation in East Asia, and defence agreements with many, choose sides, or even attempt impartial intervention?

Only in Korea, while the US maintains its "nuclear guarantee" for the southern part of a divided, but perhaps soon reunited country, does there seem to be a need for permanent US presence; and President Bush's own nuclear arms reduction initiative<sup>1</sup> seems to have both removed an obstacle to reunification, and to have reduced the certainty of the former 'guarantee'. The former imperatives for control of South East Asian seas are diminishing as practical US concerns related to these also diminish in scope.

The ASEAN nations are also much stronger than in the past, aided by modern technology that makes regional military intervention infinitely more problematic than in past years. The US still courts Indonesia, which as before is because of its size and geographical location, and its well orchestrated 'bluff' of -----

1. George J. Church, "Why The Details Are Sticky", TIME, 7 October 1991, gives details of the President's arms reduction measures.



being the regional spokesman for ASEAN. Australia potentially has the ability to make a very significant difference to the self-defensive potential of the Southeast Asian states that naturally still have fears of both China and Japan. In many areas it can provide, as it already does in FPDA, capabilities which meet its own needs for self defence in the last resort, and which complement those of ASEAN countries.

Does Australia or ASEAN need the US as a security partner in the region? Perhaps not; but both can always do with friends, like anyone else. Perhaps if Australia were less preoccupied with trying still to act as go-between, "building bridges" for its western alliance partner, it could more clearly conceive and better develop other aspects of its relationships with both Asia and the US.

For Asia and Australia, neither continued permanent American presence, nor its complete absence, is likely to foster a sense of shared interest, or to strengthen any bonds of alliance. An intermittent US presence, "showing the flag", may be just what is needed to keep all satisfied. And whatever their good intentions, the fact remains that despite greatly increased contacts between the two countries, and the ability to fly across the Pacific in only half a day, the distance between the Australia and the United States has not diminished. Australians and Americans are as different as chalk and cheese - and always will be.

ANZUS partisan Gerard Henderson has himself held out the possibility of Australia "doing a New Zealand"; he claimed this would happen if those who support the alliance lost "the battle of ideas in the foreign policy debate." And then said that Washington had to work hardest at this because "a long-time US ally should not be mugged by Uncle Sam's rural protectionist lobby". This reminds one of Sir George Pearce and Sir Henry Gullet in 1935-36, and displays about the same expectation - vocal devotion to 'shared principles' in return for economic favour in areas of divergent interest. Henderson needs to re-examine his mental habit of supporting ANZUS 'since a lad' because he saw American marines marching down Collins Street. And so do millions of others.

Australia has reached another watershed - it is just not yet ready to admit it to itself or its ally, or its neighbours. If it does not do so soon, it is doomed to relegation to the lowest rank of nation states.

## CHAPTER 7 PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

Former Defence Minister Kim Beazley was wont to remark that, in the last decade of the twentieth century, "Australia's strategic environment may have more in common with the political map of nineteenth century Europe, with its shifting alliances and multipolarity than with the situation Australia has faced as an independent country " up to the present. It was a brave attempt neatly to define a period of unprecedented political and economic change by analogy to an historically familiar set of circumstances. But the contemporary situation in the Asia-Pacific region, as across virtually the whole face of the globe, simply defies analogy. It seems decreasingly likely that there will be any sort of calm, controllable, measured progress out of the post-World War II international 'order' into what was at first being hopefully described as a New World Order.

There is unlikely to be much order at all for some time to come. The world is in turmoil, and probably will still be so as it enters a new millennium. For some, the last years of this century may be seen as the 'hour of maximum danger' - others will regard it as presenting unprecedented opportunity. The outcome is scarcely predictable. Even the most optimistic nations, or groups of nations, will wish to cling to some certainties as a form of psychological 'stabiliser' in the currents and eddies of a world

in turbulent transition. Politically and economically, the entire globe is in the process of redefining itself.

Among those for whom opportunity seems to be knocking ever more insistently are the nations of East Asia - Australia's 'northern neighbours'. Their emergence into the forefront of world affairs is matched by a growing introspection as they seek to better define and assert their individual character as nations.\* Much of this process takes the form of 'rediscovery' of the past, as a step toward defining the future shape and goals of their societies. This process is not confined to the 'emergent' nations of post-colonial Asia; it continues in China, and in Russia and its former ideological soulmates in Asia as well.

Although the current turbulence in world affairs is considered largely attributable to the collapse of the former 'Eastern Bloc', and therefore signifies the 'victory' of western-democratic ethics and free-market economic ideology and practice, the attractiveness for Asian nations of continuing with or aspiring to membership the "western alliance", and of adhering to its (which is to say, American) ideological-economic standards are at least open to question.

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\* Perhaps the catalyst for all this was Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir's call in 1982 for his and other nations to "look East". Modern examples of national redefinition include Singapore, with its leaders' call to 'speak Mandarin' and more closely adhere to Confucian social principles; an increasing desire for Korean reunification; Taiwan's budding 'native' nationalism; the Philippines' weaning from multiple dependencies on the United States; and Japan's slow-burning movement away from 'partnership' with the United States.



Both the 'leaders' and the 'followers' of the two former superpowers' blocs must also redefine their position in a world where economic strength is supplanting military might as the key indicator of a nations' status and influence in the world. So, while many nations both of the former eastern bloc and of the self-proclaimed non-aligned movement remain fearful of the consequences of unalloyed embrace of either free-market capitalism or its hand maiden political pluralism, they will continue to search for their own 'third way', regardless of labels.

The Pacific members of the western alliance, too, are now deeply engaged in this process, none more so perhaps than the United States itself.<sup>1</sup> With the end of the Cold War, the United States has "lost an empire and is looking for a role".<sup>2</sup> So too are Japan and Australia, which for forty years have accepted and encouraged the "leadership" of the United States in the affairs of the Pacific and the world. Japan must readjust to a world, and especially a region, which demands that Japan expand its

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1. 1991 has been a year of introspection for America. "Who Are We?" asked the cover of TIME, 8 July 1991. Inside, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. stated (p21) that "The Growing diversity of the American population makes the quest for unifying ideals ... all the more urgent." The question on the cover a month later (TIME, 12 August, 1991) was, "What's Happening To Our Character?" There are many more stories along these lines, and the agenda for the 1992 Presidential election is now firmly focussed upon the "domestic stuff", as Mr Bush has sometimes referred to it.

2. After a phrase used to describe the predicament of Great Britain in the post war period, in a speech by Dean Acheson at West Point, 5 December 1962: "Great Britain has lost an Empire and has not yet found a role." Penguin Dictionary of Political Quotations, London, Penguin, 1986. p1.

political involvement in international affairs to a level commensurate with its economic power. Yet both its Pacific neighbours and Japan itself remain uncertain, even fearful, of the likely results of such an expansion. Japan also seems increasingly to be regarded in East Asia\* as filling the political-economic "exemplar" role formerly arrogated by (or "thrust upon" depending on one's perception) the United States.

Central to Japan's ability to define and perform its future world and regional roles, and allay the fears of neighbours with long memories, will be its ability to define as unambiguously as possible its goals and policies. Japan, much given to searching for definitions of the "national essence", now has to come up with a more universally acceptable set of ideas with which to justify its actions as it begins to exercise its power as one of the global arbiters of the fate of nations. Japan also must overcome its feeling of *amae* towards the United States, and be prepared to take the risks that go with being a more active player in the regional and world systems.

This applies as well to Australia, although its predicament is rather different. Australia traditionally has sought its identity and security within the fold of its "birthplace" in the west. There it found ready made definitions of national interest;  
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\* Again, Mahathir's 'look East' comes to mind. But the pattern of economic mercantilist-nationalism and in effect, one-party government by an entrenched oligopoly of business, bureaucracy and politicians, also seems to find much favour. As does the continued re-assurance given the United States of its importance as regional security guarantor in an attempt to keep it entangled and less likely to restrict access to its domestic market.

none of which fit its circumstances. It would quarrel, but always stopped short of revolt; its outbursts were followed by contrition or surly acquiescence, rather than unrepentant reassertion. Australia needs to look for its philosophical-ethical "soul": and discover within itself some principles to live by and by which to conduct its international affairs. it can draw upon its western heritage, but needs also to synthesize new aspirations and standards of achievement more appropriate to an independent nation.

Both the northern and southern 'anchors' of the western alliance must, as the very basis of their future policy, review the compatibility of their regional identities, rooted in geography, with their present global identities as members of a "western community". The basis for this review has to be a reassessment of the costs and benefits of their formal alliances with the United States. Australia's key question, then, is: "Whither ANZUS?"

## **WHITHER ANZUS?**

### **Return of the Prodigal?**

ANZUS partisans were given a lift by two events in 1990. One was the demise of the New Zealand Labor Government (Lange had previously resigned the Prime Minister's post); the other was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It was expected that Labor's ouster would allow the more rational conservatives to return to the fold

of the alliance. But they did not, even though the "nibbles" have increased. Its public had grown quite fond of New Zealand's independent stance it seemed; even though in a way it only made them more visibly dependent on arch-rival Australia. New Zealand has little to gain, it would appear, by resiling from its position; 'normal' contact was resumed even before the fall of the Labour Government, and the cold war is over.<sup>1</sup>

It is said that President Bush's new disarmament initiative will solve the previous difficulty, that NCND will no longer be an issue<sup>2</sup>. It never was the issue anyway, and in their hearts, New Zealanders (and Australians) know it. In some ways the Administration now has more latitude to critically reassess the worth of its alliances than it possessed before when it allies apparently should have been more in its thrall. The US is less needful of "the numbers" to bulk out a 'free world' roll-call,  
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1. Colin James, "On Speaking Terms", FEER, 15 March 1990, p20. THE US Secretary of State and New Zealand's Foreign Minister met in Washington on 1 March 1990, ending " a four-year ban on top-level contacts" imposed in 1986 by former Secretary of State George Schultz. At this time the Labour Party (under new management) was still in power, and New Zealand public opinion, as admitted by the Leader of the Opposition, and present Prime Minister Jim Bolger,, was still in favour of the existing anti-nuclear legislation banning warship visits "unless the Prime Minister is satisfied they are not carrying nuclear weapons". Only a week later, Bolger's National Party endorsed Labour's policy, making ANZUS a "dead letter" according to its defence spokesman Don MacKinnon (now Foreign Minister). See: Colin James, "Confirm and Deny", FEER, 22 March 1990, p27.

2. Senator Evans was quoted by The Age (Melbourne), 3 October 1991, as saying that "New Zealand should rethink its anti-nuclear policy in the wake of" the United States' decision to withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from its warships. This, he said, would "put on hold the [NCND] policy that has been at the centre of the defence rift between the US and New Zealand."



and must inevitably become more selective in both the commitments it makes and the means by which they may be honoured. But what about the corollary: surely, after 40 years, Australia and its neighbours are now strong enough to dispense with, or at least not presume upon, an external security guarantee. Though both the United States and Australia regularly (by now, ritually?) restate their "regret that New Zealand's policies prevent resumption of a full trilateral relationship", it is hard to see why the presence or absence of a nebulously worded "alliance" should detract from what is once again, it seems, an otherwise "full" relationship.

Australia and New Zealand both should just let the matter lie. They must guard against commitment to again assist with propping up a status quo that inevitably must fall; and being therefore condemned to fall with it. And they must realise that this time there is no other great power to run to.

#### **"Shoulder to Shoulder" - or Head to Tail?**

The campaign against Iraq was quite erroneously taken by many as a sign of renewed vigour and "relevance" for the alliance. It only emphasised its fairly pointless nature. Australia's decision to commit warships to enforce the UN-ordered blockade of Iraq had almost nothing to do with its relations with the US, almost everything to do with its perceptions of its regional and wider interests<sup>1</sup>. Parliamentary resistance did not

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1. Australian Overseas Information Service. Australia Background. 5 March 1991. The End of The Gulf War. Statement By The Prime Minister Mr Robert Hawke to Parliament in Canberra. The Prime Minister referred not once to any need to support the United

diminish as time went on, mainly due to fears that the US was just pulling others along in the wake of its unilateral action and in the cause of preserving its own self image. But in this case the Australian government had at least acted promptly and with some judgment in the nature of forces it committed.\* Public support for the government's prompt and positive action, in backing a long-espoused commitment to the United Nations, actually rose. Australia did no harm to its image in the Gulf States, and the missions undertaken by the forces deployed were demonstrably in keeping with the spirit of support for the United Nations and for the restoration of "normal" life in Kuwait and Iraq after the war. Australia could justifiably claim that it was acting on its own initiative and not simply following wherever the US chose to wander; but is this how its action was perceived amongst its nearer neighbours, among whom sympathy for "underdog" Iraq and suspicion of a bullying United States combined to rouse

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...Continued...

States. His two key points were Australia's desire that: "the United Nations would at last be allowed to fulfill the expectations of its founders"; and that "Australia has important trade interests in the Middle East."

\* It was able to exercise some discrimination, and still make a worthwhile but non-entangling commitment, because it had finally done something to widen the still limited operational logistic support capability of the Navy. Unless it had been able to provide its own underway replenishment capability, Australia would have been obliged from the outset to attach its warships the major naval force present; in this case the USN. Which would have been a diplomatic disaster. Even though the forces were later under integrated command and control, and Australia still had to rely on the US for spare parts support for its (American built) warships, at least the appearance ( and if one wanted to be dogmatic, the fact) of independent, self-sustained presence could be maintained.

substantial opposition to the whole enterprise in the Gulf?<sup>1</sup> Many will simply look at Australia's record, and its continued espousal of the value of its alliance with the United States, and decide that Australia just marched out once again to the US tune.<sup>2</sup>

Ill-considered comment by Americans and Australians alike is likely to help perpetuate the old image. Speaking in Sydney early in 1991, shortly after the commencement of warlike operations against Iraq by US and other forces, US Ambassador to Australia Melvin Sembler proclaimed in (one presumes) ringing tones:

Once again, [the United States] stand[s] shoulder to shoulder with Australia in a noble effort to stop tyranny and aggression.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Michael Vatikiotis, Salamat Ali and Hamish McDonald, "Pax Americana", FEER, 7 March 1991. This article canvassed views in Jakarta, Karachi and New Delhi. "Washington ignored efforts to find a negotiated peace, issued its own ultimatum, and finally stuck to a preset timetable for the ground offensive." This was the mild stuff.

2. It is worth noting that when New Zealand announced its intention to send some (non-combat) assistance to the Gulf, the fact was pounced upon as indicating its desire to restore itself in American good graces and pave the way for its reentry into the ANZUS flock. The New Zealand government sent two C-130 transports and a military medical team, saying it "could not 'shirk our responsibilities' in a case of aggression and concerted UN action". Regardless of intent "Some commentators saw the move partly as an attempt ... to re-establish ties with the Western Alliance...". See: "New Zealand Prepares to Send Gulf Contingent", FEER, 13 December 1990, p14.

3. Ambassador Melvin J. Sembler, "Supporting Comments [to Opening Address]," given at the conference sponsored by the Sydney Institute and the Pacific Forum CSIS, "Challenges to Australian-American Relations After the Cold War", held 4-5 February 1991. Proceedings in: The Sydney Papers, vol.3, no.1, pp6-7.

This rather overstated the mutuality of commitment, certainly in both nature and scale of forces committed (and hence in terms of operational involvement), and, in the context of the other remarks made by the ambassador, probably misconstrued Australian motives.

Australia was supporting the UN, not the US; and it had an eye to its trade relationship with the Gulf States. Warming to his pitch, Sembler (who like nearly all US Ambassadors to Canberra is not a career diplomat) went on to say that Australia's early commitment to provide warships to enforce the UN-sanctioned blockade of Iraq:

came as no surprise ... it was natural for Australia to help uphold the rule of law. When peaceful solutions failed, Australia was with us in this fight, just as it had been through four other wars.

This managed to misrepresent a sizeable piece of Australian military-diplomatic history, besides impugning (in his latter statement) Australian motives for the limited Gulf commitment. In only one of the four previous wars referred to - Korea - had US and Australian forces stood "shoulder to shoulder" more or less from the outset. In both World Wars, Australians had been fighting alongside Britain for over two years before the US became involved. Australian involvement in Vietnam was initially hesitant, always limited in scope, and in the end precipitately concluded with, some have argued, more regard for the sensitivities of Hanoi than for either Saigon or Washington. In



no case could Australia be said to have reached any major degree of policy agreement with the US with regard in particular to post-war aims, on which it was rarely consulted and even then almost invariably disregarded. And in the Gulf, the coalition tied together by Mr Bush included a sworn enemy (Syria) and left out America's two key "partners in world leadership", Germany and Japan.

Australian Foreign Minister also spoke at the Sydney conference, again referring to "warm, fruitful, and above all ... increasingly mature" relationship. His observation that it was "clearly now recognis[ed] that alliance membership and an independent view of the world are not incompatible"<sup>1</sup> seemed to reflect, if not actively support, the ingrained faith of many Australians in the continuing value of the same old habits of dependence on a great power ally, even though that very divergence of "world view" has caused Australia more than a little anxiety in the past.

And as in the past, that ally is one whose capacity and desire for military intervention around the world will in future be far more circumscribed than they were in the fortuitous circumstances that allowed President Bush to give quick practical effect to what seemed to be almost a snap decision. And it should not be forgotten that much more than a principle was involved - a vital national interest was believed to be at stake. Nor should  
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1. Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans, "Australia and the United States in the New World Order", in: The Sydney Papers, vol.3, no.1, pp95-102.

the effect of American public opinion be underestimated.\*

### **Trade: The "Bad Old Days"?**

The shared interests of Australia and the United States are not much less nebulous today than they were eighty three years ago. The sources of friction between the two countries remain almost unchanged - Australian farmers had intended to present a petition to President Bush to cease the United States harmful agricultural subsidies and import quotas during his planned visit (later cancelled for wholly inadequate reasons) in 1991. The Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition, after ritually reaffirming his faith in the US' essential contribution to regional stability, observed that "our bilateral relationship cannot live by defence cooperation alone"; and one has to wonder

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\* It easily can be forgotten that Mr Bush was by no means assured of getting congressional support for his reaction, until he had got America into a position where to pull out was to be 'humiliated'. Shades of Vietnam; but Bush's team had learned one lesson, which was to get the Reserves involved and generate a 'wartime' atmosphere. The jingoism in Press and public alike had to be seen to be believed. Still, Bush pulled his punches; Saddam Hussein was not ousted; and the Bush-incited revolts of Kurds and Shiite Muslims were allowed to be crushed. He bought Egypt with debt write-offs, and paid-off Syria with Lebanon. In the wake of having "shaken off the Vietnam syndrome", Congress failed to pursue with any vigour an investigation into whether the Administration could by better diplomatic conduct have forestalled the whole mess erupting. I am inclined to the view that economic sanctions were not appropriate to the problem anyway; because the problem was a man, not a country; which Bush regularly said himself. And then failed to solve the problem, for fear of getting 'entangled'. How entangled is America now? The strange thing is, Mr Bush, given the stunning success and very low casualties of the Gulf forces, could have taken public opinion with him. Perhaps by then it was world opinion that caused him stop short, though he then got criticised for his action; proving the impossible dilemmas that arise from entering into 'half-wars'.

whether that cooperation can survive alone but for 'good feelings'. Dr Hewson went on to state:

The significance, for example, of our military cooperation in the Gulf will be greatly diminished if Australia is excluded from American or Allied [NATO-EEC] thinking about the requirements for post-war stability in the Middle East or if Australian agricultural exporters are squeezed out of their traditional Middle east markets by heavily subsidised American produce, particularly food aid.<sup>1</sup>

Doc Evatt would have been proud of him! And one should note that the only other commentators to offer "something of an antidote to the warm inner glow presently suffusing Australian-American relations" were also economists; but in this case, without the need to represent a part-rural constituency. Carol Austin, employed by Australia's largest mining-industrial conglomerate (BHP) noted that:

... within the Asian region there is the potential for decisions inimical to Australia's interests to be taken on strategic trade grounds rather than strategic military grounds. [She noted several possible areas of reciprocal bilateral preferential trade arrangements between Japan and the U.S.] ... Similarly, with the rapid growth of the other Asian economies, the potential for more such alliances between some of these ... and the US will grow.<sup>2</sup>

The examples of intense US pressure on Japan to buy weapons it has not asked for, and to import (subsidised) American rice,  
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1. Dr John Hewson, "After the Uruguay Round - Whither Adam Smith?", in: The Sydney Papers, vol.3, no.1, pp105-114.

2. Carol Austin, "Comments", in: The Sydney Papers, vol.3, no.1, pp90-92.

spring readily to mind, as does the shameless intervention "in the interest of fair trade" by President Bush to gain a slice of a recently awarded telecommunications contract in Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> As Austin went on to say, Australia has to be alert to the possibility that such commercial "alliances" might be "of greater significance than the military alliances we have grown accustomed to." A narrowing economic gap between the United States and other major economies made it more likely, she said, that the United States would be decreasingly inclined to see what was good for the world as good for itself; in economic matters, it had never

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1. Adam Schwarz, "Indonesia on Hold", FEER, 24 January 1991, pp40-1. Indonesia called tenders in 1989 for the supply of digital switching equipment for 350,000 telephone lines. Competition soon narrowed to three bidders: NEC, Fujitsu, and AT&T. It looked like the Japanese would get the contract, and "US officials swung into action. Secretary of State James Baker, his deputy Lawrence Eagleburger, Trade Representative Carla Hills, Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher and Vice-President Dan Quayle all telephoned or wrote to their Indonesian counterparts ... to salvage AT&T's bid. Finally, President George Bush appealed directly to [President] Suharto not to let the contract decision be influenced by 'improper pressure' [!!!]." Rugged individualism in action. Indonesia ended up letting two contracts; one each to NEC and AT&T.



acted out of altruism.<sup>1</sup> And seldom has it politically, when considering regional conflicts in the context of its world interests.

Austin's counterpart, veteran economic journalist Max Walsh, put things still more bluntly; the US was likely to return at least partially to the "bad old ways" of protectionism, besides continuing to force its way into other nations' markets through threats and preference. The implications for Australian-American relations would be "negative rather than positive ... the business reality ... will be to[wards] weaker rather than stronger links with the US."<sup>2</sup>

#### **Trade: Divergent Interests**

It seems likely that the course of trade and diplomatic relations over the longer term may differ little from the pattern of the pre-ANZUS past, regardless of whether the treaty is allowed to remain in being and simply 'fade away', or abrogated or amended. The pattern of trade has hardly altered since the 1920s; Asia, not America, has taken the dominant position once  
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1. In words similar to those used by Americans themselves to describe their views on international politico-military relationships, Robert Kuttner writes that: "The individualist American model cherishes ... 'contingent' relationships. Economic man is believed to have no attachments to his fellows except on a short-term, purely instrumental basis. Every economic transaction is supposed to be a one-night stand, because tomorrow someone might make you a better offer. ... In this view, loyalty is a purely nonrational and sentimental value." The End of Laissez Faire, New York, Alfred A.Knopf, 1991, p273. America has no monopoly on this type of behaviour; it is pretty well 'the way of the world', commercially.

2. Max Walsh, "International Trade - A Return to the Bad Old Ways", in: The Sydney Papers, vol.3, no.1, pp136-9.

occupied by Britain. Asia provides about 35% of Australia's imports, and accepts almost 60% of its exports<sup>1</sup>; Japan accounts for about half of the total within each figure. The United States still exports far more to Australia than it imports; 27.6% of Australian imports, versus 9.6% of Australian exports. There seems to be little that Australia can do to correct its adverse trade balance with the United States, given that the age-old swap of primary products for high-technology manufactures continues.

America's main trading partners are still the countries of its western hemisphere, and Europe, which together absorb over 62% of US exports<sup>2</sup>; more than double American exports to Japan (11.5%) and all the other nations of East Asia and South Asia, combined (16.55%). Although trans-Pacific trade now greatly exceeds trans-Atlantic trade, the US seems still to be having only limited success in deepening its penetration of Asian markets, and the strains now emerging in some regional economies, and in that of Japan, may limit near-term opportunities for increased sales or direct investment.<sup>3</sup>

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1. These and other figures from: OECD, Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade, October 1991. The figures used are the aggregates for the year ending June 1991.

2. The breakdown at present is: Europe, 26.68%; Canada, 19.26%, Mexico and Central and South America, 16.43%.

3. The Asian Wall Street Journal, 21 October 1991, reported that Indonesia had "postponed nearly \$10 billion of planned energy and petrochemical investments" to restrain imports and foreign borrowings and help restrain a rapidly mounting current account deficit. Malaysia, confronted by rising inflation, may need to do the same, and South Korea, too, has a mounting stock of foreign debt.

Imports from East Asia (\$17.02 billion) far outweigh in value America's exports of \$9.4 billion. American resentment is rising, and as Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew says:

If, over the next 10 years, America does not derive a substantial stake in the industrialisation and prosperity of East Asia, including ASEAN, there's bound to be a swing in public opinion in America. It's not America's job to maintain the stability and security of the Pacific for the benefit of Japan and the Asian nations.<sup>1</sup>

Lee's observation is correct, but it reflects an opinion that is widely held in America now; America has been trying for years to solve the problem of its adverse balance of trade in the Pacific, and the patience of its public and their Congressmen, if not that of the President, is close to running out. America has some potent weapons still to wield in concluding bilateral agreements for 'managed' trade; not the least of them is withholding access to its lucrative domestic market, still the largest in the world. As Lee himself noted<sup>2</sup>, there is no reason why America should continue granting to now-dynamic economies such old favours as the Generalised System of Preferences for developing-country imports or "investment guarantees, or special economic and other benefits."

America's attempts to remedy its trade imbalances with Asia threaten Australia's access not only to its best market for

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1. Interview with Nayan Chanda, The Asian Wall Street Journal, 4 November 1991, p14.

2. Ibid.

primary products, but to what increasingly is expected to be an important market for Australian manufactures and services. Future economic friction between the US and Australia may revolve more around issues of market access in Asia and probably the less developed areas of the world such as Africa and South Asia, than upon simple bilateral trade as has been the case in the past.

### **The US: Changing Tack**

The United States is now faced with the growing need to accomplish a long-overdue internal restructuring to accommodate an increasingly discontented and internally-polarised electorate. This must inevitably be accompanied by what is likely to be an accelerating contraction of its world military role, for practical and symbolic reasons. The immediate cost savings may not be great, but the removal of these tripwires for self-justifying and self-perpetuating entanglements abroad will be necessary to convince the American public that its leaders will not continue with their perhaps unconscious preference for meddling in the affairs of others as a way to avoid confronting the enormous difficulties still to be faced at home. And abroad, the perceived need for, and desirability of a permanent US military presence is rapidly diminishing.

A substantial part of the American foreign-policy establishment, in and outside of government, still refuses to see the unpleasant reality that East Asia is happy enough to sell its things, and in some matters may still feel that "it's good to



have the Seventh Fleet around",<sup>1</sup> but otherwise its feelings toward a permanent US military presence and a continuing American 'role' in Asia are ambivalent at best. Politically, it seems that support for a US military role in East Asia stems from its usefulness in preserving preferential market access and often militarily biased foreign aid programmes. But perhaps the main virtue of cultivating the United States' very apparent need to believe that is still 'wanted' and needed in the region lies with the indirect reinforcement given by military-oriented relationships with the US to the legitimacy of authoritarian military and/or oligarchic regimes which have flourished for so long in East and Southeast Asia.

In the past, tolerance and support for these regimes has been justified on the need to prevent countries being 'lost' to Communism; and as an essential condition for internal stability to underpin economic growth. Now, however, these countries seem to be prospering at the expense of the US, whilst showing little concern beyond lip-service for values held or becoming increasingly dear to Americans; besides the usual slew of individual rights, democratic government and freedom of expression, Americans now are concerned with such things with environmental protection. All this puts them at least partially at odds, philosophically, with just about every regime in Asia.

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1. Ibid. Lee was referring to the problem of the Chinese claim over the South China Sea islands; but he seemed hopeful that the matter could be 'talked out' rather than fought out.

Asian leaders such as Malaysia's Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad are openly critical of "condescending" criticism from industrialised nations on environmental and human rights issues, claiming that they "are being used to obstruct the economic growth of the developing countries". A growing sense of grievance on both sides of the Pacific will make the American public ever less receptive to arguments for 'patience' in resolving trade and other disputes with Asia, and for the need for the US to remain involved in the interest of regional stability.

There is a growing feeling in the U.S.' Pacific coastal states that their commercial futures lie in East Asia.<sup>1</sup> California Governor Pete Wilson believes that an influx of Asian immigrants can only help put his state in "a particularly advantageous position to exploit what we think is going to be a trans-Pacific explosion."<sup>2</sup> But in Eurocentred Washington, and in much of the country, East Asia is still a "hell of a way off". The west coast states are ambivalent toward the administration's "militant" approach to Asian trade, fearing it may do as much harm as good. The hopes of the west coast may be at least partially stymied by the fears of the rest of the country, and perhaps by the effects on infrastructure and education spending of mounting budget deficits in, especially, California.

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1. Susumu Awanohara, "Shrinking Ocean" (and supporting articles), FEER, 6 June 1991, pp48-52.

2. TIME, 18 November 1991, p63.

After the (impending) ratification of the North American Free Trade Area agreement (NAFTA), the opportunities to the immediately adjacent south may look ever more enticing, compared with the sheer difficulty of penetrating the markets of East Asia<sup>1</sup>. Growing resentment at the trade imbalances with China may achieve what simple moral outrage could not, and lead to restrictions upon or revocation of China's "most favoured nation" treatment in US markets. Both President Bush and any Democratic Party successor will be under great pressure to limit China's trade privileges as much on practical as on moral grounds; Chinese disregard of patents and its circumvention of clothing and textile import quotas are raising the ire of business and congress alike; and Bush's diplomatic 'open door' policy has so far produced absolutely no visible effect on China's internal or external policies. The events in Tiananmen Square never did make much impression in the rest of Asia, and in their aftermath relations between China and most other nations of the region have actually improved.

Despite Lee Kuan Yew's assertion that East Asia must, as a matter of self-interest, keep open its markets to American manufactures and services, he like his neighbours is suspicious of the implications for ASEAN of NAFTA, and so he should be. It will divert, as he predicts, much American investment away from Asia; further reducing America's 'stake' in the region. ASEAN's intended regional Free Trade Area, and an increase in intra-

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1. Susumu Awanohara, "Enter the Latin Dragon", FEER, 11 July 1991, pp42-3.

regional trade preferences<sup>1</sup> may be seen as much as a counter to the foreseen effects of NAFTA, in diverting American trade and investment, and forestalling Asian access to Latin American markets and investment opportunities, as well as being an effort to avoid Japanese or American 'economic hegemony' being exercised through either Mahathir's proposed East Asia Economic Caucus (formerly, Group), or the more encompassing APEC, which includes the US and the other 'English speaking peoples' of the Pacific.

In military-strategic terms, Southeast Asia is fast becoming irrelevant to the United States' main global concerns. Its earlier clearcut military goals of denying free movement of Russian and Chinese maritime forces, of securing the sealanes to Japan, and maintaining access to the Indian Ocean in support of its global and regional postures, now all have diminished in importance. The Cold War is over, Japan is already a strong maritime power, and in the wake of the Gulf War, American access to regional base and support facilities seems assured for at least the next decade. The gradual return to 'acceptability' of the Republic of South Africa, soon may make available once more the facilities of the Simonstown Naval Base. And although the US may still in the short term perform a useful "balancing" function in Korea whilst the issue of North Korean nuclear capability remains unresolved, an emotional, damn the consequences, rush to reunification could, German style, suddenly occur. It is quite

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1. "ASEAN Endorses Proposal For Free Trade in Region", Asian Wall Street Journal, 14 October 1991, p12.



possible that those forces remaining in Korea and Japan will be asked to leave by the host governments, due to domestic political reasons<sup>1</sup>. These same factors always will have to be taken into account in countries which grant 'access to facilities' rather than 'basing rights'. Aggravation over such matters as trade, and 'interference in internal affairs' via pressures for internal reform and more stringent environmental policies, easily could lead to a sudden denial of entry to US forces. In other words, it probably will be simpler for the United States to support its Middle Eastern and Indian Ocean interests from the Atlantic coast rather than from 'forward' bases in the Pacific.

Though the US apparently intends to 'pull back' to Guam from the Philippines, it remains to be seen whether the necessary funds will be made available even to partially replicate the facilities that will be left behind. And if it has no bases actually in East Asia to tend, Washington's interest in the

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1. Mark Clifford, "Ambivalent Allies", FEER, 3 January 1991, 18-19. US Ambassador Gregg reportedly noted figures from (then) recent polls of public opinion. "The number of Koreans who view the US favorably has dropped from 70% six years ago to 24% at present." Another poll reported that 79% of University students "held the US responsible for division of the country, with 64% believing the US was reluctant to see Korea reunified." This at a time when the US had it was going to tell the ROK it had to "pay a larger share of the housekeeping costs" for US forces remaining in Korea. Japanese resentment at the rising cost of keeping US troops in board and lodging - and at American pressure to 'pay up' their 'share' for the 'Gulf thing' - may yet overcome most domestic qualms about being left without any overt restraint upon the JSDF and Police; and the powers behind them. See for example the comments in: Tadashi Matsumoto, "Withdrawal of US Forces: Workers Worry About Keeping Jobs", 31 December 1990; and Yoshihiro Tsurumi, "King George [Bush] And Colonial Taxes: Japan's Ambivalence Toward The Gulf War", 4 March 1991. In The Japan Times Weekly International.

Western Pacific may reduce even further, leaving the American focus even more sharply upon 'unfair' trade imbalances and 'undemocratic' regimes.

## **FUTURE PROSPECTS**

As it adjusts to the challenge of an extended period of uncertainty and 'chaos', the US must in many ways shake off a pattern of conduct, developed over the post-war era and to a large extent now regarded as normal and necessary by the current administration and by leaders in many of its satraps abroad. The era of the cold war represents an aberrant interregnum in the traditional pattern of American diplomatic practice; no less than was the isolationism that followed Wilson's abortive attempt to make the world safe for democracy. For the most part, America's leaders advocated and pursued a policy that might be described as "discretionary involvement" in world affairs; being in general careful to discriminate between the superficially appealing and the indubitably necessary.

President Bush now says that "America must lead again - as it always has, as only it can."<sup>1</sup> But America never had the right and now no longer has the resources to recreate the world in its own image. The American model in any case has deteriorated to such a degree that while many may covet the ideal, they see little virtue in the reality. America is frittering away it  
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1. Quoted by Peter McGrath, "The Lonely Superpower", NEWSWEEK, 7 October 1991.

substantial resources of "soft power"<sup>1</sup> because its President still clings to a preference for the "hard", coercive power that could be exercised by an economically and technologically unchallengeable America in the decades following World War II.

James Madison had thought that if Americans "be free and happy at home, we shall be respectable abroad." And thus both respected and emulated. The ultimate elaboration of this line of thought was rendered in 1821 by Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams:

Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will [America's] heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under banners other than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assume the colours and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to

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1. A term coined by Joseph S. Nye, Jr, in his book Bound to Lead. Soft Power is essentially the power of influence by example, the "power of ideas". Nye points out (p195) that America has an enormous soft power advantage, through its control of global media: "in 1981 [before worldwide CNN] the United States was responsible for more than 80% of world-wide data transmission and processing of data." America exported seven times as many television shows as Britain; but many of these only contribute to an image of violent decadence. As Nye said in an interview (TIME, 29 July 1991, p32) America has lost much of its hard (coercive) economic power, due to its descent from creditor to debtor status, and risks losing as well its soft power "if our cities fall apart, if we can no longer offer our citizens upward mobility..." He could have added affordable health care and education to the list too.

force ... She might become the dictatress of the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit." <sup>1</sup>

John Quincy Adams and President George Bush probably would not get along at all well. While Adams advocated great caution and selectivity in foreign involvements, keeping uppermost the concern for their direct relevance to American national interest, President Bush seems to have no such concern. He remains concerned to exercise "world leadership", though the idea of an American-led 'new world order' leaves a very great deal to be desired in the eyes of much of the world, and perhaps especially in the western Pacific. At present, the envisaged new order seems to be little more than a re-jigging of the same tunnel vision which saw American foreign policy over its 'leadership' period become obsessed with combating global communism through, principally, 'hard' power: force of arms and refusal of normal commercial and diplomatic intercourse. America went out in search of dragons to slay; and neglected the goannas in the back yard. This has come to be seen as "typically" American behaviour; further degrading the ideal. It is worth asking what it was in the American image that so appealed to Asia's 'freedom fighters' during the colonial era; and what it is that so disturbs them now. Lee Kuan Yew, never lost for an answer, said this last year:

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1. Quoted by Walter La Feber, The American Age, p80. La Feber notes that Adams' words were 'repeatedly quoted 150 years later by those opposing the US war in Vietnam'. Whilst they seemed to fit that situation almost like the proverbial glove, the broad intent and guidance offered is I think, a pretty useful statement of principle for most powers in most circumstances.



Asians are in little doubt that a society with communitarian values, where the interests of the society takes (sic) precedence over that of the individual, suits them better than the individual rights of Americans. Asians see Japanese achievements as higher and the Japanese are not pushy or self-proselytisers - at least not yet.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Lee did not mention the deep distrust still harboured toward the Japanese in especially China and Korea, in no small part due to Japan's inability still to come satisfactorily to terms with its past excesses. Controversy continues over ordered rewrites of school textbooks, and Japan's 'unapologetic' attitude, fuelled by such outrageous assertions as that made by Shintaro Ishihara that the Rape of Nanking "is a story made up by the Chinese."<sup>2</sup> Even so, America itself may be coming around to Lee's view; TIME magazine deplored the fact that America was becoming a nation of "finger pointers, crybabies and busybodies", obsessed with individual "rights" to the detriment of individual responsibility and social obligation. It quoted approvingly a view in *The Economist* of "a decadent puritanism within America: an odd combination of ducking responsibility and telling everyone else what to do."

One can only applaud America's still undiminished capacity for ruthless self-examination; and hope it yields results, which will allow America to 'lead' through the 'soft power' of influence by example, and not through either coercion, or  
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1. Hamish McDonald, "Shaking The Perch", FEER, 8 November 1990, p22.

2. Interview in Playboy Magazine, October 1990, p63.

cooption of regional 'partners'. The domestic focus of the 1992 Presidential campaign is a sign that this process may soon be underway, leading, with luck, to a less engaged, but more engaging, United States.

### **A New Cold War?**

The 'new world order' dimly articulated by U.S. President Bush and more or less acquiesced to by Japan and Europe for lack of their own ideas, serves only as a conceptual crutch; inhibiting nations great and weak alike, from standing up alone to offer alternatives to a world sorely in need of a revitalisation of spirit. The strong and weak alike lack confidence, in themselves and in the future of their regions and the world. Nonetheless, some are better equipped to resolve to their own satisfaction at least some of their uncertainties.

Of the "power-centres", the United States has the habit but no longer has the means to guide world affairs. And its internal state is rapidly eroding its claim to moral authority. Much the same can be said of Europe, which in any case looks less homogeneous on the eve of union, than it has for the last two decades. Neither the United States nor Europe has the economic leverage of Japan - but Japan is still something of an unknown quantity in regional and world affairs. The Russian empire is in chaos. China remains more concerned with internal stability than with 'changing the world'. Neither direction nor control of the

future world system is likely to be found until the regional position of these power centres has stabilised, and their relative power capacities and proclivities has clarified.

Having seen out the end of one cold war, the US and the West in general now should be alert to the possibility of a new cold war developing - a war that will be fought on two fronts, between shifting coalitions of adversaries. One front will be the battle, chiefly philosophical in origin, between Asia and the West. It has its origins in the sense that the growing prosperity and political influence of Asian nations demonstrates the 'correctness' of the path adopted by most in both internal and foreign and trade policies. The west is perceived to be in decline morally and physically, even as it seeks to impose its own precepts (which in matters of trade and statecraft it does not adhere to) as the basis for a 'new world order' in international relations.

The preoccupation of Western Europe with its own problems of political-economic union and absorption of its "lost cousins" from east of the Oder-Niesse line, and the apparent likelihood of an accelerating drift apart between the champion of the west (the US) and its erstwhile acolytes in Europe and elsewhere, tends only to reinforce the notion of Europe and a USA that increasingly are concerned with maintaining a no-longer justifiable stranglehold on the world economy and political system. Resentment of the dictatorial ways of the West was very evident during the Gulf War, from top to bottom of East Asia. It is complemented by growing self-assertiveness, reflected in the

views of Singapore's Minister for Information, George Yeo who "has asked why Southeast Asia should judge its relations with neighbouring states on the basis of 'Western values' [which], he argues, are likely to become more irrelevant in Asia as 'Eastern values' come into their own and change the present intellectual convention that Western values should dominate the world."<sup>1</sup>

This is the main difference in international affairs in the post-colonial, post-cold war world: regional affairs no longer are subordinate to broader global trends in the balance of political and economic power. Instead, the global trend will itself mainly be determined by what happens in the various key regions of the world. In all respects, Australia is between a rock and a hard place. It is linked militarily and philosophically to a western alliance whose three key components are drifting inexorably apart. The leader of this system is increasingly alienated from Australia's near region, even while its supposed "key ally" and "partner" (Japan) is striking forth on its own and being encouraged (within and from without) to assert its potential as leader of the Asians and "first among equals" in the world system.

Australia has a military alliance with the US, but its largest market is Japan; and its second largest is East Asia "in the broad". It retains a strong cultural dependence on the west, which is gradually being alienated from Asia. Both the European

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1. Michael Vatikiotis, "Join the Club", FEER, 20 June 1991, p26.



and American wings of the west are geographically remote, and increasingly preoccupied with internal and regional questions. For all its efforts, Australia may be drifting to the periphery of regional and hence world affairs. This is an unwholesome position which if not forestalled could lead to revival of the old paranoia about invasion and subjugation.

### **Goodbye To All That**

Australia and Japan are about to lose their key patron, in substance if not in theory. Militarily, the US is on the way out of Asia and it is futile for Australia, and possibly for Japan too, to try and prolong the agony as a means of clinging desperately to a false sense of security.

The current difficulties in the American-Japanese relationship are good for the principals and for the world. It is widely held that the US still acts as a restraint on Japan, containing its ambition and tendency to arrogance and lust for hegemonic power. But then again the US has been no angel in this regard, since it prefers direction to inconvenient consultation. A more competitive relationship may be good for both. The continuing presence of US military forces in Japan is less a brake upon Japanese ambition than a balm applied to soothe US fears of irrelevance and impotence, and Japan's fears of itself. For all their own studies of the national spirit, the Japanese believe they are essentially power mad and untrustworthy, it seems, when given power. Unable or unwilling to restrain themselves, they rely upon pressure from the outside to do it for them.

The recent behaviour of Japanese business and the Liberal Democratic Party offers some justification for that view. But basically the US presence in Japan and the illusory notion of equal "partnership" is maintained to assuage the fears of both parties as they confront an uncertain future. For Japan, it has to overcome its fears of facing up to: the political responsibilities of economic power; the inherent weakness of its resource base and trade dependency; and the problem of its cultural separation from most of the world, due mainly to language and ingrained xenophobia.

For the US, its concerns are the erosion and possible loss of overwhelming coercive power; and the need to resort once more to the power of persuasion and compromise. Both nations are reluctant to come to grips with the mounting pressure for change within their own societies. The privileged relationship of the past was a comfort to both, an emblem of stability at home as well as abroad. Neither wants to change what once served each so well; both must.

The US-Australia relationship is far more in the classical patron-client mould. Since neither wants to be alone in the world, they continue to swear mutual allegiance on the basis of the past, to avoid confronting the future. However both Australia and the US must of necessity become more introspective and regionally oriented as a precondition for the inner revitalisation and regional economic integration that are essential to staking out a claim to a sustainable position, let

alone eminence, in the future world system. Australia especially has no time left to delay pursuing this course; the longer it delays defining its future in the Southeast Asian region ( and in the Indian Ocean region as well), the greater the chance that it will not become a valuable part of an 'interdependent' community, but will be faced with the more stark and infinitely less desirable choices of absorption into something 'bigger than itself', or relegation to the periphery on which will wander various minor nations that lead a mendicant existence on the table scraps of charity thrown by an otherwise self-satisfied world.

#### **AUSTRALIA: CATHARSIS OR STASIS?**

Australia's attachment to the west has inhibited it from finding itself. To some extent this is recognised in Australia, and manifested in increasing disaffection with the nation's continued and anachronistic link to the British Crown. But while the form of real political independence is being pursued with at least some little vigour, the substance of independence - putting an end to psychological and physical dependency on the US in particular, and the west in general, and asserting a genuine self-reliance in all senses - still is avoided like the plague. Foreign Minister Evans claims Australia is undergoing a revolution in its identity; but it still shows few signs of a revolution in its outlook or its aspirations.

Not too long ago, announcing his 'new look' for Australian policy Senator Evans said that "it is erroneous to assume that 'stability' is good and 'instability is bad.'"<sup>1</sup> Yet his government still maintains that Australia's military alliance with the United States is a "cornerstone" of its strategic policy, and that the "continuing strategic engagement of the United States in the western Pacific" is the "key to maintaining a stable security system in Asia." Prime Minister Hawke's hopeful sentiment that "the US is inclined to work through the network of its existing defence links in the region" bodes ill for Australian regional policy. Hawke, it seems, is yet again falling for the old illusion of Australia as a western emissary to Asia. He thinks Australia can "build bridges of cooperation" through its military alliances.

Perhaps the Five Power Defence Agreement has helped and will continue to help demonstrate a positive Australian interest in the continuing secure development of Southeast Asia; it is hard to see what value there is in this role for ANZUS. To set up Australia as America's messenger to Southeast Asia is to revert to the behaviour of the past, and suffer the same consequences of subordinating the pursuit of national interest and sound bilateral relations to the ethereal goal of generating 'good feelings' between opposing parties. Let the UN, or some truly impartial nation mediate; and let Australia carve out and adhere to its own position on regional issues, not some pale reflection

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1. Australia's Regional Security, December 1989, p41.



of the desires of either America or another. Australia cannot assert or be true to itself cast in the role of errand boy for the US, nor as whipping boy for the nations of Southeast Asia. The Australian government should pay less attention to reinforcement of old habits and old prejudices, and more to the fact that:

...from an Asian perspective, Australia - or at least Hawke - often seems to be more interested to be seen playing a role outside Asia[:] in the Middle East or South Africa, making use of its strong [British] Commonwealth and US ties, than cultivating immediate neighbours. ...

Too close an identification with the US and APEC could be a liability for Australia if trans-Pacific relationships between East Asia and North America deteriorate<sup>1</sup>

Australia continues to define itself (and thus is defined by its neighbours) as part of the west, and it acts that way. This may be logical in terms of the past, and there is no harm in recognising a cultural debt to its European forebears, any more than various nations around the world have deemed it expedient to adopt certain aspects of western social, legal and parliamentary practice. Any attempt to deny its essential commitment to the inherited and evolved western liberal-democratic tradition would sunder the very fabric of Australian society - and remove one of the main attractions for the immigration and investment upon which the viability of the nation so much depends. But the fact remains that the imperatives of geography and regional political,

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1. Philip Bowring, "Take Your Medecine", FEER, 10 October 1991, p34.

economic and military developments are all of direct relevance to Australia's security, whereas they exercise at best a peripheral influence upon the policies of the other nations of the west. For the United States, Southeast Asia has never amounted to much more than a sideshow to its major struggles; economic struggles with colonial 'closed shops', ideological struggles with communism, and now another economic struggle with Japan and perhaps much of East Asia.

In sum, Australia may feel culturally part of the "west" for some time to come, but strategically it cannot afford to retain the same attitude. Its goals and its likely problems are far different from those of both Europe and the USA. It cannot deny the acquaintance - it has to discard the alliance.

Australia must prepare to wind its way between the traps and pitfalls of what is emerging as a new cold war in the Pacific - a war of politics and economics no less difficult to resolve, and perhaps no less dangerous in its potential, than the ideological division from which much of the world is now emerging. Another confrontation looms, too, between the conspicuous haves and the equally conspicuous have-nots of the world - with those nations in the middle, like Australia, trying strenuously to avoid relegation to the latter and avoid over-identification with the former; attempting to moderate the fears of the haves and the demands of the have nots, at least as much in order to avoid being absorbed or overwhelmed and relegated in status, as through any altruistic motive.

### **The Security Outlook**

The growth of political regionalism and regional trading blocs is probably inevitable and its durability unpredictable. Europe is self-absorbed and unremittingly selfish; the US is less selfish perhaps, but has a potentially dynamic 'third world' right on its doorstep, and this will decrease its interest in the Western Pacific. Asia is both resentful of the west and determined to outstrip it, assertive of its dynamism and destiny, yet fearful of the possible reaction elsewhere. The pressure for Japan to 'secede' from its unnatural position as the west's Asian satrap will eventually achieve its aim. Competition for influence and markets in Africa and South Asia will be dominated by Europe and Japan's East Asian bloc - with China possibly playing a lone hand wherever it can, and Russia still distracted by its own problems. Australia faces the possibility of being left out of all of this: it is too far away from the West; it is 'too different' to gain ready acceptance into an Asian bloc; it may have too little else to offer to be worth wooing as a partner, except as a supplier of raw materials.

Australia must abandon its western-built crutches to liberate both its policies and its image (and self image is as important as regional image) from the conceptual shackles and practical deadweight of military, diplomatic and economic dependence upon the councils and counsels of the west. It is no use trying to team up with the US to arrest the pace and alter the nature of the inevitable changes sweeping East Asia and the adjacent regions. The US (or at least, its Eastern 'ruling

circles') may already have departed spiritually, being more concerned with short-term responses to regional affairs than with long-term planning or taking new initiatives in regional development. On the limp excuse of pressing domestic circumstances, President Bush postponed his long-arranged visits to an ally of "enormous strategic importance"<sup>1</sup> (Japan), another "steadfast ally and key Pacific partner"<sup>2</sup> (Australia), and to hardly less important South Korea and Singapore. Instead he sent Secretary Baker, who seems to have had a fine time telling others what to do again, before returning his attention once more to Eastern Europe and the Middle East.<sup>3</sup>

Australia has to adjust to no longer having even the illusion of a guarantor in the west, as the end of US military presence in the region removes the last imperative for the US to get involved on any side but its own. A recent report says that Australia's Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues believe

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1. National Security Strategy of the United States, The White House, August 1991, p9.

2. Ibid.

3. Mr Bush cancelled on 5 November, to avoid accusations of excessive overseas travel associated with his preoccupation with foreign affairs. But he went ahead with visits to Europe, which seemed to achieve nothing in particular. And he got nothing done at home either. The Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly reported (11 November 1991, p16) that reaction was "muted". So it was in public; I would bet that it was not in private. Only weeks before the cancellation, Bush's trip was described as "an excellent opportunity to reverse the pervasive feeling that Washington in recent years has neglected [Asia]." See: Susumu Awanohara, "Crying For Attention", FEER, 24 October 1991, pp24-5. Also: Susumu Awanohara and Jonathan Burton, "Under The Carpet", FEER, 21 November 1991, pp11-12.



that "Australia needs a cathartic experience administered by damn-the -political consequences leadership"<sup>1</sup>; but they refer only to internal economic policies. Opposition industry spokesman Ian McLachlan reportedly said that "After 25 years of drifting along, Australia faces a pretty monstrous set of circumstances which demand radical change."<sup>2</sup> These are revolutionary words, yet despite this apparent sense of urgency and determination, "no significant change of policy would be likely if there were a change of government". Neither Government nor Opposition, it seems, has a sufficiently revolutionary outlook to embrace the possibility that a nation can thrive on instability, and the opportunities it offers.

Defence Minister Robert Ray has acknowledged that Australia faces:

considerable strategic uncertainties as we enter the 1990s. we are not in Europe, where we might benefit directly from the decline in superpower tensions. We have regionally based defence needs and they have not diminished. There are tensions and pressures which could impact our security, and which require us to maintain our military capacity to protect Australian interests, or to contribute to regional efforts to resolve a problem.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Philip Bowring, "Liberals Flex Their Faith", FEER, 10 October 1991, p29.

2. Ibid.

3. Australia Background, Defence Into The Twenty First Century, statement by the Minister of Defence to Parliament in Canberra, 30 May 1991.

Senator Ray acknowledged that "we must plan on carrying out our primary combat tasks ourselves." But he prefaced these remarks with the hoary old belief that any:

potential aggressors will need to be wary of the response of the United Nations and the United States. ... Australia will continue to receive support from alliances, including access to advanced technology and intelligence, and emergency resupply ...

If Australia should have learned any lessons from its history, it is that none of these things can be relied or calculated upon. Neither can defence programmes that require a decade or more to bear full fruit. Most of Australia's modest plans for improved naval capability will not show results until near the end of the decade, or even into the next century. In a mainly maritime region, where the potential causes for international tension lie so largely at sea, the dilatory pace of Australia's maritime force modernisation and expansion is a positive liability in its efforts to play a more effective diplomatic role independent of the good offices of the west and the United States.

Even in respect of the low level of direct threat Australia is expected to face, the fact is that its warship strength and capability will not reach even the projected bare minimum level in numbers until 2004: thirteen years hence, and well beyond the turbulent "next decade" that ought rightly to be Australia's main concern. The navy's smaller warships will not even start to be replaced until then; one can only hope nothing much comes up in the meantime. Similarly, Australia is content to place such vital

assets as airborne early warning and control aircraft 'on hold', reducing the already limited potential of its small fighter-strike force , and more importantly limiting their opportunities for training and tactical development. The absence of such key appurtenances of modern warfare only helps reinforce Australian dependence on the USA.

The United States too will increasingly, rather than decreasingly, be obliged to cultivate bilateral rather than multilateral relations. Few of Asia's smaller nations wants to be part of multilateral organisation with the United States, which explains both the attempt to develop an alternative to APEC and resistance to the idea of a regional security grouping which includes America. The US often seems unwilling to accept anything less than primacy in its dealings with any such arrangements;<sup>1</sup> the US and Japan in tandem is an even more disturbing prospect. Australia ought to have learned that its attempts to have the US "included in" lead mainly to the feeling amongst its neighbours that Australia has to be "included out" of regional organisations. It is becoming like some person who cannot be invited anywhere because he always brings some uninvited guest. Australia must learn to go places on its own, and America has to learn to accept this imperative. The US has no entitlement to use its alliance as a means of imposing itself upon every regional arrangement which Australia may wish to enter into. And Australia -----

1. In the military context, this is understandable, in those cases where the US is committing sizeable forces, whose capabilities and doctrine are virtually unique in the world.

has no right to try and pull America along with it as some kind of 'power amplifier' in regional affairs.

On the other side of the coin, America's pursuit of bilateral relations in Asia, be they economic or military, may bring it increasingly into economic and diplomatic conflict with Australia. There is no guarantee that in a bilateral dispute with another regional nation, the US might not feel that its own interests were best served by either withholding support from both parties, or from either one - which could mean Australia. So far as the supposed advantages of alliance go, they need to be taken with a hefty grain of salt. Both American and European defence industries face a great contraction in local demand and will compete ever more ferociously to sell their wares abroad. And the continuing technological development of Australia's neighbourhood offers bright prospects for regional co-development of both defence and other equipment.

Former Ambassador Bill Lane recounts that in 1985 he told Hawke, Beazley "and others ... that Australia was indeed fortunate to have an ally such as the United States from whom high quality goods in the defence industry could be purchased."<sup>1</sup> Hawke and Beazley might have pointed out that America was indeed fortunate to have an ally who himself paid full price for what was purchased and did not require other forms of financial bribery in return for his support. The implied 'threat' of

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1. The Sydney Papers, vol.3, no.1, p134.



withholding access to high-technology products is an unnecessary and unjustifiable slur upon Australia's 'reliability' as a non-aggressive nation. If the main condition for access to US armaments is act as a regional sub-contractor on its behalf, Australia should seriously consider its alternatives.

As for intelligence, Australia in the past has been both misinformed or left uninformed by its allies. There is no reason to suppose that they would not do the same in future if it suited their purposes, and so ultimately Australia still has to rely upon itself. As shown in any number of instances, supply of armaments and related wares can be seriously affected by competing demands and political chicanery within alliances, and its denial may be used as coercive pressure in a bilateral relationship.

Finally, just as Australians are repeatedly told not to judge their neighbours by their own standards of either conduct or logic, nor should they apply the same logic to dealings with the United States. "Mateship" has no place in the American lexicon, and in fact be more closely paralleled by Asian concepts of reciprocal obligation and group loyalty. no faith can be put in the willingness of America to rush to the aid of a "stalwart ally" any more than it might rush to the aid of a distant and rather dubious acquaintance. Most Americans know nothing of Australia and could care less. This does not mean the two countries cannot work together in areas of mutual interest, nor should they deprecate the value of such values and experiences

that they share. But they come from different places, and have different destinations; any coincidence of view point must be regarded as a bonus, not a given.

### **New Identities, New Ideas**

Australia has already had plenty of cathartic shocks, from the fall of Singapore to Keating's 'Banana Republic' comment that sent the Dollar plummeting, from Britain's 'betrayal' to enter the EEC, to the present spectre of double-digit unemployment. It doesn't need any more shocks - its needs some sensible policies to anticipate and mitigate, even turn to its advantage, those shocks that will accompany the shaking down of a new regional and world system. It needs its own comprehensive and self-administered shock - of revolution not just in identity or 'business spirit', but in foreign relations and defence.

The end of first, colonialism in Asia, and then of the distortions created by the cold war, has permanently changed the face of Australia's strategic environment, creating new uncertainties, but reducing the crushing fear of former ingrained fear and prejudice. Over 32% of each years' more than 100,000 "new Australians", now are of Asian birth. The former Immigration Minister (now Minister for Defence) Senator Robert Ray, reckoned in late 1988 that by 2025, "Asian born migrants will represent about 7% of the Australian population"; and this does not count migrants from west Asia or those Australians "with an Asian

heritage, whether one generation or 130 years old"<sup>1</sup>. This is enormously important to Australia. It will accelerate replacement of the last vestiges of "yellow perilism" with a wider and deeper appreciation of, especially, East, Southeast and South Asian cultures. And it will also provide the links of family and old friends that once helped bind Australia so tightly to Britain and the ideal of the Anglo-Saxon world. This will greatly facilitate the development of both the opportunities for Australian business, and of the skills needed to identify and take advantage of them. Australia will at last develop empathy with its neighbours; and with this, at last, that long sought-for sense of "shared destiny".

Australia's defence policy rightly should be the handmaiden of its foreign and economic policies. For too long, these last have been subordinated to the spurious logic of the indefensible continent and the notion of western solidarity. The plodding progress of Australian defence policy, and the continuing dependencies that this fosters, however, still serve to inhibit both Australian foreign and economic-industrial policy. Unable since 1914 to see armed forces as a necessary (however regrettable, it still is so) underpinning for a vigorous and positive diplomacy and commercial policy, Australians continue to regard their defence policy in an essentially negative light.

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1. Robert Ray, "Still the Land of a 'Fair Go' Despite Racist Fringe", FEER, 15 December 1988.

Lacking the positive justifications of providing ultimate sanction for diplomatic goals, or for safeguarding commercial interest, the only remaining reason for armed forces has been to either react against direct threat to the nation, or to show tangible support for a protecting power. The assumption always has been that a 'real' threat could only be that of invasion, for which there would be plenty of time to prepare. There never has been; only in 1914 was Australia even close to being ready to protect those of its immediate interest that might be threatened. Both in World War II and during the disputes over West New Guinea and Confrontation of Malaysia, it reached some adequate level of military preparedness after the main threat had passed. Its long term plans have never been carried through. In unanticipated events, such as the Indonesian invasion of Timor in 1975, it has been left flat-footed, as it was also during the first Gulf crisis during the Iran-Iraq War. It had no answer to the threatened 'collapse' of ANZUS other than redoubled pledges of loyalty.

It was not necessary to regard as Australia's only other defence option, some such stark alternative to ANZUS as "armed neutrality". The opportunity was presented for a thorough reconsideration of the terms of the treaty, if not at once, out of deference to American wider concerns, then later, and in private. It is ridiculous too, to continue the harping on the two great alternatives of "forward" or "continental" defence, either of which, founded in the notion of the Indefensible continent and the reactive role of armed forces, only helps perpetuate the



sense of dependency. Senator Ray says that "Australia must not return to the old and discredited forward defence policies of the 1960s." Certainly it should not. More importantly, it should not revert to the old and discreditable habits of dependency on a foreign protector whose good graces had to be sought by military tokenism and diplomatic complaisance, complemented by a form of mendicant economics in which Australia has wasted more time begging for favour than it would have spent getting out and doing for itself.

I do not see what is wrong with forward defence based in forward thinking diplomacy, economic-industrial enterprise, and judicious commitment of armed forces to cooperation with regional nations. Australia has long identified the security, stability and prosperity of Southeast Asia as almost synonymous with its own interests. Australia could be in a very useful position of being able to contribute both to the security of Southeast Asia, through heightened military, industrial, economic and diplomatic collaboration, as well as easing Japanese fears about the security of the sea lanes upon which its prosperity so heavily depends. Australia has a vested interest in ensuring the continuing safe and unrestricted passage of shipping in the South China Sea and the waters to the north: 60% of its income depends on it.

The United States of course has a long-standing commitment to uphold the freedom of the seas, but regional intervention even in support of this very important principle is likely yet again to lead to more charges of US 'bullying' and 'hegemonic

tendencies'; and thus to shift the regional focus from problem-solving to America-baiting and revival of anti-Western sentiment.

Australia should be alert to the possibility that it may in future need to provide maritime peacekeeping or intervention forces in support of United Nations action, or support for a regional security body of some kind, not mention its continuing commitment to the FPDA. And there really is no telling what sorts of tensions and conflicts might arise as almost all of Asia's autocrats and ruling oligarchies expire within the next decade.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

In so asymmetrical a partnership of so differently situated allies, trans-Pacific perceptions are likely to coincide rarely indeed, except by accident. And there is not much that anybody on either side of the Ocean can do about that.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest curiosity of the relationship between Australia and the United States is the enduring tendency of spokesmen from both nations consistently to make so much of so little. Politicians, diplomats, official and unofficial spokesmen of all kinds seem able at the drop of a hat to summon up a vision of inseparable partnership, based most usually upon "shared ideals and experiences" which must inevitably lead to "shared commitments". The most striking example of this is the popular mythology surrounding the ANZUS alliance, which has come to be regarded as the quintessential expression of the durability of Australian-American relations in all fields of national endeavour.

Maintenance of the military alliance between the two countries appears to be regarded as a sine qua non for maintenance of relationships across the board. But this clearly cannot be the case. Both Australia and the US have found it

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1. Glen St.J. Barclay, Friends in High Places. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985, p210.

expedient and even vital to develop and sustain economic, diplomatic and cultural ties with many nations that have at some time been regarded as actual or potential enemies. One does not need to be identified as a formal "ally" to at least conduct the normal round of diplomatic and commercial intercourse with another state - nor even to gain particular favours. Australian politicians in particular are prone to entertain grandiose notions of Australia being party to a "special relationship" with the United States. They would do well to bear in mind the astute observation of no less a person than George Washington that " the nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave" and that a truly independent nation bent upon charting its own course in the world "may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies". Australia's own history points to the enduring good sense of those observations. There is little more to be gained from alliance than from acquaintance - and to sustain the latter, existence of the former is neither necessary nor desirable as a permanent state of affairs.

Australian governments go to some pains to discount the fact that Australia's national security policy has indeed become "in some degree a slave" to the illusory benefits of alliance with the world's greatest military power. The relationship, they say, is "mature" and "a genuinely equal partnership". The very notion is absurd - equality of circumstance there never has and never will be. And maturity in this context means little more than senescence. It may be that, as hopefully stated by James A.



Kelly, that the "historic cooperation [between Australia and the United States] will continue to meet each party's needs and therefore earn and re-earn the right to sustain itself for many years to come."<sup>1</sup> But the scope and mutuality of desire for that cooperation are less than is commonly assumed. The relationship itself has no "right" to future sustenance on the basis of past coincidence of interest, which has been more fitfully perceived and less harmoniously pursued, than frequent allusions to "historic cooperation" would suggest.

And regardless of how one may view the past, an inexorable divergence of interest is now well underway. Politicians and many influential commentators in both countries habitually deny this, ritually citing reasons of natural affinity between the two countries. Similar heritage, cultural influences, shared (almost!) language, democratic-pluralist societies, all are regularly invoked. For all the talk of shared values, and some dimming memories of "stand[ing] shoulder to shoulder against tyranny", the two nations have less in common than either might wish to believe. The relationship has been, is and will most probably continue to be something less than 'special'. It has been given the illusion of greater depth and substance mainly through the existence of a formally concluded security treaty

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1. James A. Kelly, Australian-American Relations After the Cold War. Paper presented at the Sydney Institute 1991 Conference of the same title, published in The Sydney Papers, Vol.3, No.1, Sydney, The Sydney Institute Publications, 1991. Kelly was formerly Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan for National Security Affairs.

concluded in 1952 between Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Australian governments, their ministers, advisers and critics have all been prone ever since to make more of the agreement than its provisions would warrant, and have also tended to see it as extended the level of 'partnership' far beyond the military-ideological confines in which it was conceived and acquiesced to by a reluctant senior partner. Only lately have US administrations tended to outwardly attach much significance to the Treaty; at first to prevent the spread of "New Zealand disease", and now perhaps to arrest a waning of influence in the western Pacific. But even that belated interest may simply help foster (or perpetuate) some dangerous delusions on both sides of the ocean.

Retired US Navy Admiral (and former CINCPAC) Ronald Hays observed that "in the absence of the cold war, strategy to justify alliances for the next several years will be complex, far more so than [before]."<sup>1</sup> He is right, and it is likely that the justification for extra-regional alliances in particular will become increasingly difficult to identify and sustain, especially in an economically straitened and militarily contracting United States. Prime Minister Hawke insists that Australia's "most important alliance is with the United States", which Australians have traditionally seen as "a shield against an Asian threat." He asserts that we now maintain that alliance as a means to help "build bridges of cooperation with the region." It is more likely

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1. The Sydney Papers, vol.3, no.1, p157.

to prove a barrier. In any case, assessments of the worth of any alliance or agreement between Australia and other nations must be, as Ian McLachlan says, a question whose answer has more to do with what it will mean to be an Australian in the future than what may have been understood to be 'Australian' in the past - in terms of both identity and national interest: "less with being an historian than with being an Australian *now*." Towards the end of his bicentennial offering, McLachlan observed - and this three years ago - that undoubtedly:

"*this* is the time to take careful stock of our present and likely future. I've always been sceptical of defence spending - until researching this book brought home the full, miserable story of hopeless neglect."

Like him, I too think it is time for Australians to confront a number of questions. He asked if Australians were prepared "to complete the [1987] Beazley programme in less than the ten years envisaged...". The answer has already been given: No. The programme has been trimmed and stretched out over twenty years. He asked if we were "prepared to reconsider our ANZUS commitment." Again, the answer is, no. How much longer must we wait for the revolution?

Only for as long as it takes to admit the truth; identity is not developed within an alliance, but separate from it. An alliance is not a "pillar" of national security policy, but scaffolding, that serves a purpose to enable building or repair of the structure of national security: and which must then be dismantled . And perhaps to be re-erected when repairs or

strengthening are needed; both Australia and the United States can in the future "safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies".

The alliance has been a diplomatic burden for Australia, and something of a fool's paradise economically. The healthy shock of the Japanese threat of isolation and impotence, if not of invasion, revealed the weakness of Australian diplomacy as well as of industry, exposing the stark folly of dependence for protection (diplomatic and commercial, as well as military) upon a great and powerful ally with his hands full and half a world away. But the pain of these shocks, and of the realisation of a radically changing political-economic landscape in Asia, was very largely nullified by the balm of membership in a new protective 'family'; and as the pain subsided, so too did the stimulus it had given for Australia to carve itself a new place in the region and the world. In the meantime, its near and not so near neighbours have done so - are still doing so. Australia is the laggard, and in large part has only itself to blame.

In seeking a short term solution (the ANZUS treaty) to a short-term and short-sighted perception of potential military threat from Japan and, then China, Australia's politicians created an illusion no less seductive, and no more substantial, than that of "Imperial Union" in defence and foreign policy, and Imperial Preference in economic and trade policy. And in the process they acted counter to Australian national interest.



In addition to the damage done to the substance of Australian economic development and diplomatic relationships, a more lasting and pernicious damage was done to Australia's image in the region of greatest proximity, concern and potential benefit - East Asia. Australia's future security hinges heavily on how it is regarded by regional nations. The ANZUS connection has contributed in no small measure, and continues to help foster, feelings of negative regard bordering on hostility, or perhaps even worse, just plain indifference. Australia may be becoming irrelevant to East Asia, and ANZUS can serve no longer as the opiate of either the government or the people.

So far as shared or reciprocal alliance obligation goes, there is no certainty of what is meant by it on either side. The US-Australia Joint Communique in 1990 referred to the United States'

understanding that the Australian Government's [defence] programme ... focussing on strategic responsibilities and regional cooperation, contributes both to the defence of Australia and to Australia's fulfillment of its alliance responsibility.

Another pat on the head for Australia, whose "responsibility" under ANZUS is to defend itself; as is that of the US, which is reflected in the fact that there was no mention of the US having fulfilled its alliance responsibility - because it has none. And if there is at least some hazy understanding or agreement as to ends (in terms of defence of intangible assets such as 'freedom') there is rather less as to means. There has been some unity of purpose in war, both hot and cold. There is

some basis of shared principle and ethical standards, social mores, cultural background and preference. But the relationship lacks depth, which is not entirely surprising since the physical differences in circumstance, to say nothing of the immense distance which separates the two nations, and the considerable disparity in environment and experience, are not really the stuff of which lasting bonds are made - certainly not permanent alliances which will endure regardless of the constant and it seems, accelerating, changes in the order of world affairs.

Undoubtedly the United States is well aware that the world is changing - it has been devoted to bringing about many of the changes that have taken place, at the rush, over the last few years - yet it has seemed very much to be taken by surprise. There is no doubt too, that the US is chiefly concerned with change in Europe. For all the talk of the Pacific century, and for the westward shift of much of its population, the US primary region of concern remains, as it has been since at least World War II (and arguably since World War I), Europe and Russia. Australia, not always willingly, has always been obliged to at least pay attention as a matter of life and death to the events taking place in East Asia. In its history as a nation, Australia has also been too inclined, though, to continue to see itself as part of the west and rely upon its links to those far distant nations for its security in all senses - its prosperity, its population, its defence and even its sense of community and identity. This has to change, fast.

Australia has hitched its wagon once already to an empire in decline in the hope of security and amplification of its importance in world and regional affairs. It has been sadly disappointed. Despite the infinitely stronger bonds which existed between Britain and Australia, the smaller partner had it forcibly revealed that in the end, national interest counted most - and Australia, for all the ties of "shared blood and allegiance to the crown" was not Britain - was not a "vital interest" to its supposed patron and defender. The preservation of Australia, its people, way of life, economy, territorial integrity, national sovereignty - none of these things are vital to the US either, and are important only in the abstract. The US gets nothing from Australia - tangible or otherwise - that it could not normally, even in a pinch, do without. Perhaps less obvious to Australians is the fact that the reciprocal is largely true as well. The assumption of mutuality of interest is stronger than, today, the fact.

There is one fundamental difference, perhaps - Australia is groping, however haphazardly and stumblingly, towards a better future in Asia. The US still appears to be trying desperately to patch up the dangerous but comfortably familiar fabric of the past; but an attempt to hold together the order of the last forty years is doomed to failure - potentially ignominious failure at that. Unfortunately for Australia, it is once again falling for the seductive voice of a 'powerful and willing' friend whose power and willingness may in future be greatly reduced. The uncertainties of the future are great indeed - but they are less

threatening, and offer more opportunity, than is willingly conceded by a US administration that seems most concerned to maintain for America a position as arbiter of the world.

Asia has only reluctantly accepted America in this role, and will actively contest what the US does not concede over the next decade. The mood in Asia is of the ascendant - the conviction appears to be that the west has finally reached its peak and is now in the descendant. Australia has no future in acting regionally as an outgrowth of the west, impossible as it may be to deny the heritage of two centuries' largely exclusive European influence. It has a vested interest in upsetting, not maintaining the status quo. This could put it irretrievably at odds with the US.

In February 1991, US Ambassador Sembler claimed that the "friendship" between the US and Australia "has passed many tests, and it has been strengthened in times of conflict even more than in times of peace." Perhaps, and perhaps not. The relationship has really only existed in any definable way due to the existence of conflict, or the sense of impending conflict. In times of 'peace', the US and Australia have been largely indifferent to each other; and even in war, the passage of time and events has tended to make the relationship even more fractious, rather than "even stronger". Today, it seems that it is the US which may be a 'frightened country' in the Pacific, while Australia, however hesitant, may at last be on the verge of overcoming its western-induced lack of confidence and becoming genuinely involved in the affairs of its adjacent region.



This is not to say that the US is entering a period of decline leading to "fall": but it is about to undergo a period of great change in its relationships abroad, and in its world view, and a contraction in its overseas military presence is undoubtedly already underway. The latter is likely to exceed in scope and scale the forecasts of the current administration, and with diminished forward military presence will come diminished willingness to respond with force to events which do not fit the administration's desired pattern of "new world order". The attempt to leave "stay behinds" in the form of regional powers equipped and "briefed" to act as surrogates for US-perceived world desiderata is fraught with peril but will still be hard to resist for both policy and pecuniary reasons.

Nonetheless, it has proven disastrous in the past and is likely to prove so again, and is certain to be resisted by concerned regional nations. The nominated 'surrogates' may find it convenient to play along with the US, minimally satisfying, outwardly, its apparent expectations for their regional "leadership roles" - but their own eminence in the world and desire to preserve it is and will continue to be a primary source of friction with the United States. The only really effective way of avoiding the problems likely to arise is to convince the US that its perceived role of "balance wheel" is unnecessary and even counterproductive - so that a surrogate would be the same.

The US will have to change its attitude to Australia as well. Australia can no longer be a mere acolyte, to be petted or brushed off at will. It is essential for both nations now to conduct an honest appraisal of their relationship, and determine how and in what ways they would prefer it to develop in the future. They should begin from the assumption that a permanent military alliance is neither essential nor is it desirable for either Australia's physical security or for its development into an influential participant in the affairs of its adjacent region.

Free of all pangs of kinship, of false expectations of mateship, of illusion of 'equal' partnership, Australia and the United States had better get started, if they are still interested, in developing a more solid and enduring acquaintanceship.

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